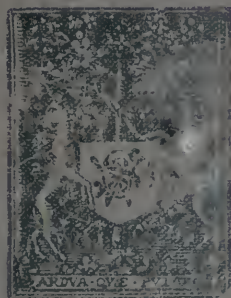


THE QUAKERS

F. S. TURNER





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THE QUAKERS.

THE QUAKERS

A STUDY

HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL

BY

FREDERICK STORRS TURNER



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1889

P R E F A C E .



IN 1872 the writer of this book returned in broken health from a second period of missionary labour in China. Two years later some members of the Society of Friends invited him to become secretary of a Committee formed to agitate for the suppression of the Opium Trade between India and China. At this time he was totally ignorant of the history and religious belief of the Friends, unless the vague and hazy notions about them in the popular mind be called knowledge. Although association in philanthropic work, and much kindness received by him, produced in his mind a high esteem for their Society, strange to say, he remained in the same state of ignorance for nine years. The Quakers do not proselytize: and he was too much absorbed in other studies to enter upon an investigation which seemed of no practical interest. The study of the Evidences of Christianity, commenced in China for the sake of the heathen, had to be continued at home in the face of the rising tide of scepticism, which threatened to sweep away the very foundations of the Christian faith. A long and sore mental conflict he had to pass through, in the course of which he was sometimes reduced well-nigh to despair. But in the great mercy of God, he kept his hold on the faith, or rather the truth kept its hold upon him; until gradually a new conception of the Christian religion and its evidences was revealed to him. This conception he wrote down in the early part of 1883, in a paper as yet

unpublished. In that year a quaker lady gave him a copy of John Woolman's Journal. At once he recognised that his new conception was not new, but had been revealed to others before. Following the clue, he plunged into the study of George Fox and the primitive Quakers, traced the story to the present day, and was led to the conviction that it was his duty to write the book now in the reader's hands.

The writer is not a Quaker, nor is the book especially addressed to Quakers. Its central truth is, according to his belief, the very foundation of the Christian faith, which, in this sceptical age, it behoves every Christian to know clearly, as well as to possess experimentally. Therefore, if he has had any class of readers in his thought more than another, it has been those who have had to pass through, or are now in the midst of a conflict with unbelief. But this he can honestly say — and let the reader judge — the history is, as far as his utmost endeavour could attain, pure history. Not a word, not a line, of the history is accommodated to the exigency of an apologetic argument. Much there is in the narrative which the writer could have wished otherwise, but the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, has been his aim.

The foresight that some of the Friends will be grieved by portions of the book is painful to the writer. But those whose forefathers called themselves not barely "Friends," but "Friends of Truth," and "Children of the Light," will freely acknowledge that he had no choice. Mistaken he may be; but it was imperative that he should write the whole truth as it appeared to him.

F. S. T.

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THE QUAKERS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

IN 1648, after a whole generation of mortal combat, Catholicism and Protestantism stood face to face, bleeding and breathless, yet mutually defiant and irreconcilable. Germany was half-depopulated. Once flourishing cities were ruined, and fertile districts had fallen back to forest. All Europe had taken part in the conflict, and the nations were drained of life-blood and treasure. Slowly and sullenly kings and priests recognised the exhaustion of their resources, and terminated by the peace of Westphalia the Thirty Years War. The attempt to restore the Unity of the Church by the sword had failed. Luther and Leo X. had rent the Church in twain, and the schism was irreparable. The two sections into which western Christianity was then split have diverged farther with the years, and to-day they eye each other across a great gulf; neither party seriously essaying the conversion of the other; each regarding the evangelization of Asia and Africa as an easier enterprise, more likely to

be rewarded by speedy success, than any effort to reunite Christendom.

In England, in the year 1648, Puritanism was triumphant. King Charles was a prisoner, for whom the axe was sharpening, to fall in the coming January. Episcopacy was suppressed. Romanism, hated and feared as Antichrist embodied, was too weak in Britain to cause serious alarm. On our island soil, Protestantism stood, a strong man armed, who had bound his foe and taken possession of his goods. Flushed with victory, confident that the Lord of Hosts was on his side, the strong man may even have dreamt for a moment of crossing the waves, and renewing the war against Rome. Just at this time, in this puritan England, a new Reformer appeared, who challenged Protestantism in its stronghold, denounced the reformed churches as unsparingly as they denounced the Papacy, and proclaimed through the length and breadth of the land, the return to the world of that primitive and spiritual Christianity, the temporary disappearance of which from the earth was pre-figured, he said, in apocalyptic vision, by the flight of the Woman arrayed with the sun, and with the moon under her feet, who, after the birth of the Man-child, was compelled to flee from the dragon, and to hide in the wilderness, until the appointed time.

This precursor of the new Reformation, by name George Fox, was born in 1625, and was twenty-three years old when the Westphalian peace was signed. Well-nigh forgotten now, except by the small sect which traces its origin to him, readers of this generation catch a glimpse of him, through the spectacles of one who was in some respects a kindred spirit, Thomas Carlyle.

“Perhaps the most remarkable incident in modern history,” Carlyle makes his Teufelsdröckh say, “is not the Diet of Worms, still less the battle of Austerlitz, Waterloo, Peterloo, or any other battle; but George Fox’s making to himself a suit of leather. This man, the first of the Quakers, and by trade a shoemaker, was one of those to whom, under ruder or purer form, the Divine idea of the Universe is pleased to manifest itself, and across all the hulls of Ignorance and earthly degradation, shine through in unspeakable Awfulness, unspeakable Beauty, in their souls; who therefore are rightly accounted Prophets, God-possessed, or even Gods, as in some periods it has chanced.”

Whatever the exact meaning of this language, it shows that the great moral teacher of the nineteenth century, to whom also something of a prophetic character has been attributed, held the Quaker prophet in sincerest reverence, and in a sense believed in his mission. The “suit of leather” is not quite historical. In his journal Fox wrote that in many places the priests, that is the clergy, were so afraid of him, that they would get out of the way when they heard that, “the man in leathern breeches is come.”¹ Nor was he altogether a shoemaker. He tells us himself: “I was put to a man that was a shoemaker by trade, and that dealt in wool, and used grazing, and sold cattle; and a great deal went through my hands.”² William Penn says: “As to his employment, he was brought up in country business, and as he took most delight in sheep, so he was very skilful in them, an em-

¹ *Journal* Edition 1827. Vol I. page 146.

² *Ibid.* page 76.

ployment that very well suited his mind in several respects, both from its innocency and solitude ; and was a just figure of his after ministry and service." Probably young George learnt to handle awl and bristles, and could cobble a shoe, or sew a pair of leather breeches, but in the latter part of his apprenticeship he seems to have been employed in attending markets. That he was the first of the Quakers is true ; but without explanation the statement conveys an erroneous impression. The Quakers have for generations been a quiet religious sect, few in numbers, inoffensive, and retiring : so far from zealous in obtruding their peculiar tenets upon public attention that perhaps hardly any one outside their fraternity knows exactly what their creed is : but everybody knows and respects them as a sober, wealthy, peaceful, philanthropic society of nonconforming Christians, the friends of all, the enemies of none.

Not of such Quakers was George Fox the first and founder ; but of a people of almost entirely opposite characteristics, a people numerous, notorious, aggressive ; poor, persecuted, and of evil reputation. In the eyes of their contemporaries the first Quakers were Jesuits in disguise, disturbers of the churches, emissaries of Satan, the latest spawn of hell, undermining the very foundations of the truth ; the more to be hated and dreaded, because they concealed diabolical designs under the garb of an outwardly strict and blameless morality. In their own eyes these calumniated folk were no sect, but the only true Church, divinely raised up to complete the work of the Reformation and to restore pure, primitive, spiritual Christianity. Richard Baxter and John Bunyan saw in George Fox a half-crazed blasphemer, a deluder

of giddy brains and seekers after novelties, a heretic of heretics. In the eyes of William Penn and Robert Barclay he was a prophet sent from God. The Quakers, instead of keeping their principles retired in the quiet shade of secluded meetings as their descendants do, were in their first generation the universal disturbers of the churches. They entered cathedrals and parish churches in the time of public worship, and contradicted the preachers in the name of the Lord. They proclaimed their message on the highways and the hill tops; to the king in his palace, to parliament in session. When Lord Protector Cromwell opened his parliament at Westminster, Samuel Fisher, though not a member, rose to declare to him the word of the Lord. Edward Burroughs wrote to Charles II. with the boldness of Elijah addressing King Ahab. Such men could not escape persecution, nor did they wish to escape. One injunction of their Divine Master, I find them to have overlooked, and it was this; "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye unto another." The Quakers would not flee, they preferred to die. So the prisons of England were filled with them, and numbers perished under their sufferings. Nor was their zeal limited to these islands. In Paris they were denounced as a hellish sect. They traversed and took root in Holland, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and America. Their women crossed sea and land to bear God's word to the Pope and to the Sultan. They were the filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things in the eyes of the orthodox; and the mob, prompt to support the orthodoxy of the day, stoned them, beat them, rolled them in the mire, flung them into the stream. But the more they were persecuted, the more

they flourished. Before the death of their founder, their numbers, their piety, their energy and zeal encouraged them to predict the universal triumph of their principles.

Not less remarkable than the vehemence of their early zeal, and the furious opposition it encountered, is the suddenness and completeness of its subsidence. Up to the end of the seventeenth century, they confidently foretold the conversion of the world to quakerism. In the eighteenth they were paralysed, almost fossilised. In the nineteenth they sadly calculate the probable date of their extinction. During the last few years an increase of activity has arrested the decline and revived hope in some breasts. But the stirrings of new life are the result of the influence of modern evangelicalism, not a revival of the old quakerism of George Fox. Already to the student, quakerism seems to belong to a museum of religious antiquities rather than to form a living part of the Church of the present day. Among the Quakers it is a frequently expressed opinion that their decay as a denomination has been brought about by the general acceptance of their principles; an opinion not destitute of considerable plausibility. The more we study their original doctrines, the greater is our astonishment to observe in how true a sense and to how great a degree quakerism was prophetic; advocating, generations in advance, reforms which are now accomplished facts, and other reforms the necessity of which begins to be perceived. Religious toleration, for which they were among the earliest and most consistent pleaders, is now the accepted doctrine of civilized humanity. They were the first to insist upon that truth of speech and fixity of price in

traffic which is the established custom of trade amongst us. The sturdy Quaker refusing to doff his hat, to bow and scrape and bend the knee, to nobleman, magistrate, or monarch, was the harbinger of the modern democratic spirit. In an age when fine gentlemen arrayed themselves like peacocks, the Quaker gentleman cut off the buttons and bows from his dress, and the Quaker tailor refused to make foppish attire, though the refusal cost him his livelihood. Quakers were the first temperance reformers, the earliest friends of the negro slave. They from the first elevated woman to complete equality with man; they advocated, and for themselves obtained, the abolition of oaths; they protested against war as unchristian, and chose rather to die than to kill. Two centuries ago, the Quakers emancipated themselves from the domination of a professional clergy, and proved by experiment that the highest type of Christian life is possible without sermons and without ceremonies. All these particular features of quakerism are parts and consequences of their conception of the source and nature of Christianity itself; and not until after a careful survey of their doctrines and practice shall we be in a position to consider how far this conception was true, and to what extent it was obscured and encumbered by the admixture of errors prevalent in their day. But the cursory glance we have already taken may well make us marvel, both that so excellent a people were once so foully libelled and bitterly hated by their fellow-Christians, and now have so sadly dwindled away. Even in their decay, there is a quiet dignity and beauty. In the last century when quakerism as a religious movement was on the verge of extinction, the life that

was in it re-appeared in the form of philanthropy; and in this character the sect has ever since taken the lead among the churches. Mainly through their zeal and self-denial the abolition of West Indian slavery was achieved, and still, with unwearied pertinacity, though almost alone, they toil for the entire suppression of slavery the wide world over. In the great work of prison reform, Elizabeth Fry takes rank with John Howard. In the temperance movement, in the education of the masses, in the protection of oppressed aboriginal races, in advocating peace and goodwill among men, the Quakers march in the first rank of philanthropists. When Paris, freed from the German leaguer, was on the brink of starvation, Quakers hurried forward with supplies, and were waiting outside with stores of food, before the road was opened. Such deeds as these have won for them the respect and love of mankind. Probably there is not one Englishman in a thousand who could give an account of Quaker tenets; and not one Englishman in a thousand who is ignorant that from William Penn to Joseph Sturge and John Bright, Quakers have been the friends and benefactors of the human race.

To study this George Fox and his principles, to try to discern whether he was a half-crazed fanatic or a prophet of God, would seem then not likely to prove mis-spent time. Possibly the study may shed some light upon the religious perplexities of the present day. Possibly the sudden decadence of the sect may have been due to the fact that the age was not fully ripe for the reception of the truth which was revealed to Fox and his followers. We must not prejudge the case before

hearing. It may turn out in the end, that some of us will attribute the arrest of the movement to the discovery that its original impulse was in a false direction: others may judge that the collapse was rather due to the unfaithfulness of the succeeding generation to the truth they had received. But, whatever the issue, the study of so remarkable a development of Christianity can hardly fail to be instructive. Quakerism is an off-shoot from the great Christian trunk, and a biological study of this one minor branch may aid our efforts to understand the whole tree.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHALLENGE.

ONE Sunday morning in 1649—in what month is not known, and the year is fixed only by a marginal note, to which some doubt attaches; possibly the occurrence may belong to the end of 1648—the congregation in the principal church of Nottingham witnessed a memorable scene. The townsfolk had passed through a long period of excitement; for seven years before, King Charles hoisted his royal standard in their old castle; and afterwards their town was held for the parliament, gallant Colonel Hutchinson doing brave deeds of arms against the Cavaliers. But now Hutchinson was in London, where he had lately been one of the judges who tried the defeated monarch; and peace was in all the land, save that Cromwell was mustering his forces for Ireland. The great many-windowed church was probably filled with worshippers: for those were church-going, sermon-hearing days, when absentees and dissenters were few and unpopular. The service was conducted according to the Directory of the Westminster Assembly, and the clergyman in the pulpit was a Presbyterian. In the previous century Queen Elizabeth ejected the mass and installed the prayer-book. Now the Long Parliament forbade the prayer-book and introduced the Genevan form of worship. In both cases the people, a minority

excepted, submissively accepted the changes. The officiating divine on that Sunday morning, whether the Rev. Edmundus Laycock, the vicar, or another, was doubtless a clergyman of standing and repute; and the sermon would be earnest and scholarly. One would like to be able to revive in mental picture the long-ago scene; the sober citizens and their wives; soldiers of the garrison; the magistrates, the gentry, the craftsmen, and the poor, seated rank behind rank, in solemn stillness; while up above in the tall pulpit, the grave, black-robed parson watched his hour-glass as he duly gave forth his sixthly and seventhly; and the serious monotony of his discourse rolled over their heads, like the low thunder of unseen waves beating on the dark shore of a world of dreams. Meantime the maiden's thoughts strayed to her lover; the trooper wondered whether he would be sent to the Irish war; the townsman mused sadly on the recent news from London, and as he imagined to himself the black-draped scaffold outside Whitehall, and the blood-dripping head of the Lord's anointed held on high in the executioner's hand, he shuddered; for the hearts of the people were loyal to King and Church, and hated the military despotism which professed to bestow on them civil and religious liberty. So the preacher droned on in the pulpit, and the hearers stared at him in that half-narcotized condition with which church-goers are familiar. Suddenly a man stepped forth into the aisle in view of all; and a strong clear voice rang out like a battle-cry. In an instant the blood leapt to the brain, every sleeper woke, and a thousand eager faces were straining towards the youth. He was a tall, gaunt, young man, with piercing eyes, long hair, his countenance pale

and emaciated as with frequent fasting ; but the glow of enthusiasm lighted it up as he flatly contradicted the preacher, hurling back in his teeth the very foundation-doctrine of the Protestant faith. "No. It is not the Scriptures. It is the Spirit of God." Is he another Luther, herald of a new Reformation, or is he a mad-man ? In justice to him, and as a preface to our inquiry, let George Fox describe the scene for us in his own words.

"Now as I went towards Nottingham on a first-day in the morning, with friends to a meeting there, when I came on top of a hill in sight of the town, I espied the great steeple-house, and the Lord said unto me: 'Thou must go cry against yonder great idol, and against the worshippers therein.' So I said nothing of this to the friends that were with me, but went on with them to the meeting, where the mighty power of the Lord was amongst us ; in which I left friends sitting in the meeting, and I went away to the steeple-house ; and when I came there all the people looked like fallow ground ; and the priest, like a great lump of earth, stood in his pulpit above. And he took for his text these words of Peter: 'We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.' And he told the people that this was the Scriptures, by which they were to try all doctrines, religions, and opinions. Now the Lord's power was so mighty upon me, and so strong in me, that I could not hold, but was made to cry out and say: 'Oh, no, it is not the Scriptures;' but I told them what it was, namely the Holy Spirit, by which the holy men of

God gave forth the Scriptures, whereby opinions, religions, and judgments were to be tried: for it led unto all truth, and so gave the knowledge of all truth. For the Jews had the Scriptures, and yet resisted the Holy Ghost, and rejected Christ, the bright morning Star, and persecuted Christ and his Apostles, and took upon them to try their doctrines by the Scriptures; but erred in judgment, and did not try them aright, because they tried without the Holy Ghost. Now as I spake thus amongst them, the officers came and took me away, and put me into a nasty stinking prison, the smell whereof got so into my nose and throat that it very much annoyed me.”¹

Poor George. He was not yet accustomed to prisons, the condition of which in England at that time, and for long after, was not unsavoury merely, but too often deadly. During the ensuing quarter of a century Fox spent about six years in prisons, in which he endured worse than foul smells. But now the young man was fresh from the fields and the woods, and confinement in a stinking gaol was an offensive novelty to him. He richly deserved the punishment, you say, for his scandalous interruption of the preacher. It is doubtful, however, whether the interruption was in itself a serious offence, if an offence at all, according to the feeling and custom of those times. In the religious excitement which had so largely contributed to bring about the upheaval of the whole framework of society, it was not an unheard of thing that a preacher should be challenged in his very pulpit. Did not the Apostle Paul ordain, that if anything were revealed to him that sat by, then the first speaker was to hold his peace? The interrup-

¹ *Fox's Journal*, Vol. I., page 105.

tion no doubt was an irregularity, which might, however, have been justified, or at least excused, if the character of the communication had been other than it was. George Fox was listened to in silence for some minutes : and not until the shocking nature of his utterance was perceived, did the order issue for his removal. Two or three years before this time Parliament had enacted an "Ordinance for the Suppression of Blasphemies and Heresies," in which it was decreed that the denial of the doctrine of the Trinity, or of the divinity of Christ, or *that the books of Scripture are the Word of God*, was to be punished by death, unless the offender should abjure his heresy. His startling declaration in Nottingham Church brought George Fox perilously near to the application of this statute : nor can we wonder that the magistracy felt bound to subject him to strict examination.

Our interest being rather in the prisoner than in the judges, let us turn back for a second glance at that page from his journal. The reader notes that Fox entered the church in a hostile frame of mind. The very sight of the great "steeple-house" filled him with prophetic wrath. "The Lord said unto me, thou must go cry against yonder great idol." The steeple-house was the idol. Popular language, popular sentiment, then as now, called the building consecrated to sacred uses, the House of God : and to Fox this was idolatry. Some time before, there was a great gathering in one of the Leicester churches, in which Presbyterians and Baptists, Independents and Episcopalians met to discuss their differences. Fox was there, and listened quietly for awhile, until a woman ventured to put a question. The clergyman who was in the pulpit said that a woman was not

permitted to speak in the church. "Whereupon," Fox tells us, "I was wrapped¹ up, as in a rapture, in the Lord's power; and I stepped up in a place, and asked the priest: Dost thou call this (the steeple-house) a church? Or dost thou call this mixed multitude a church? For the woman asking a question he ought to have answered it, having given liberty for any one to speak. But he did not answer me neither, but asked me what a church was. I told him, the church was the pillar and ground of truth, made up of living stones, living members, a spiritual household, which Christ was the head of; but He was not the head of a mixed multitude, *or of an old house made up of lime, stones, and wood.* This set them all on fire; the priest came down out of his pulpit, and others out of their pews, and the dispute there was marred."² The steeple-houses, the old mass-houses, as Fox perpetually reminded his Protestant adversaries they had been formerly, were in his view "idols," the objects of superstitious reverence, and therefore offensive to God. Nor was the worship carried on therein less displeasing to him. "When I heard the bell toll to call the people together to the steeple-house it struck at my life: for it was just like a market-bell, to gather people together, that the priest might set forth his wares to sale. O, the vast sums of money that are gotten by the trade they make of selling the scriptures, and by their preaching, from the highest bishop to the lowest priest. What one trade else in the world is comparable to it?"³ Tetzel's sale of indulgences did not stink more intolerably in Luther's nostrils than

¹ "Wrapped," he wrote, for rapt.

² *Journal* I. 93.

³ *Journal* I. 105.

the tithes and stipends of the clergy in those of George Fox. He denounced all who received money for preaching, whether they received it from the state or from their congregations, as covetous hirelings, diviners for filthy lucre, false shepherds who devoured the flock. Besides his aversion to a paid ministry, he was opposed to the clergy on other grounds; for it was one of his earliest revelations that "being bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to make a man fit to be a minister of Christ." What was the nature and what the value of these "revelations" of his must be considered in another chapter. Here we note that the audacious young reformer set out on his mission, running full tilt against the prevalent faith in the Church, the priesthood, and the Bible.

At this point I am somewhat afraid that my reader may think that he wants to hear no more about George Fox. If the reader is a sceptic, to whom not even the Bible is a revelation from God, he will hardly consider it worth while to listen to the "revelations" of an ignorant fanatic of the benighted age of the Puritans. If he is an orthodox believer, clinging to the traditional faith in the Word of God, he will be disgusted at this reckless assault on its authority. In either case, he may, perhaps, on farther investigation, see cause to modify his first impression. Whatever our hero was, it would be difficult to name the man who loved his Bible more, and was more familiar with its contents than he. In his lifetime it was said, that if the Bible were lost, it could be written down again from Fox's lips. Some of his writings consist almost entirely of continuous quotations of the sacred text: and in every controversy he appealed to the scrip-

tures to decide. Whatever we may think of his revelations, had not his mind been thoroughly steeped in, and saturated by, the scriptures, he would never have had any revelations at all; or at least they would not have come in the form which we shall see they assumed. On the other hand, he who has rejected the idea of an external revelation, should not hastily impute his own view to George Fox. It may be that a patient study of the records of this simple shepherd lad, may throw some light on the possibility of the human spirit receiving illumination from the Divine. At any rate, the saintly character of the man, the deep impression he made upon his contemporaries, and the fact that in some respects he was far in advance of his age, constitute a claim upon our attention which may well outweigh any unfavourable impression produced by his first appearance on the scene.

No man can be understood apart from the generation to which he belongs. If, as Carlyle avers, "the age of the Puritans is not extinct only, and gone away from us, but is grown unintelligible, what we may call incredible,"¹ then we may as well abandon the study of George Fox, and of much beside. Carlyle, however, means no more than that he himself did not believe what the Puritans believed. "The Christian doctrines which then dwelt alive in every heart have now in a manner died out of all hearts—very mournful to behold, and are not the guidance of this world any more."² A touching lamentation this, but only a rhetorical way of expressing his sorrow that he could not hold fast to the faith his mother

¹ *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, Vol. I. chap. i.

² *Ibid.*

taught him. In the spiritual as in the material world ancient types survive alongside of recent forms. The stone and bronze ages extend into the age of iron. So in religion, Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity exist side by side. Romanism and Protestantism are contemporaries, and it is possible to understand seventeenth century Puritanism, because it continues on into the nineteenth century. Shades of difference there must be, but probably in the difficulty of estimating their importance the danger of exaggerating is greater than that of neglecting them. The first half of the seventeenth century is frequently spoken of as a period of extraordinary religious excitement, the prolific parent of a shoal of mushroom sects: Ranters, Seekers, Familists, and other uncouth and now unintelligible names. In their hatred of religious liberty, the Presbyterian clergy gloated over the discovery of each new monster, as another argument against toleration. One of them collected, under the repulsive title "*Gangrena*,"¹ no fewer than one hundred and seventy false opinions and heretical sects. The list is formidable, but some of the condemned opinions are harmless enough, others could never have been more than wild utterances of the moment. We do not think the age of Mill and Darwin, Huxley and Spencer, especially credulous, but the census returns of our own day contain a list of sects about as long and fully as eccentric as that bequeathed by Edwards. With the Mormons, the Shakers, the Peculiar People, the Spiritualists, the Agapemones, the Anglo-Israelites, and such like, amongst us, it is not for us to exclaim against seventeenth

¹ *Gangrena: a Catalogue of 166 Errors, Heresies, Blasphemies.* By Thomas Edwards. London, 1676.

century fanaticism. The enlargement of the intellectual horizon by the wonderful progress of physical science ; the achievements of Biblical criticism, a branch of study not entered upon two centuries ago ; the researches into comparative religion ; and that general growth of the human mind of which we are scarcely sensible, have all combined to influence our religious sentiments, to a degree which cannot easily be measured. These deductions being allowed for, and it must be remembered that there are multitudes who are but slightly affected by them, the Puritanism of George Fox's day is still preached in a thousand pulpits, is still the honest belief, and the rule of life, of a numerous body of adherents.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, England was almost entirely Protestant ; and the Protestants, whether Calvinistic or Anglican, were above all else Scripturalists. Despite of his dislike for Genevan Presbyterianism, Archbishop Laud was at one with it in regarding the Bible as the supreme rule of faith. When Fox began to teach, Luther had only been dead about a hundred years ; and King James's version of the Bible had for a generation been the spiritual food of the English people. The religion in which Fox was brought up, from which he had during years of painful conflict vainly sought light, strength, and peace, was in its groundwork a book-religion. In the ancient catholic creeds, God occupies the first place as the object of faith, and with Him Christ and the Holy Spirit ; followed by the Holy Catholic Church and the communion of saints. The Scriptures are not mentioned, neither as the object nor as the rule of faith. In the Confession of Faith of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, the first place is occu-

pieced by the Holy Scriptures, which are declared to be the rule of faith and life. This important innovation, first introduced by Zwingli, gives definite expression to the transition from Catholicism to Protestantism. The Bible takes the place of the Church as the supreme authority, and becomes practically the mediator between man and God. But the Bible is treated as a storehouse of texts, to be extracted and combined into a system by the labour of Divines. The doctrine of justification by faith as taught by Luther, and that of God's sovereignty, shown in predestination, in its twofold aspects of election and reprobation, as taught by Calvin, filled almost the whole horizon of religious thought. In the background of all, the terrible doom of everlasting torment hanging over a guilty world made it the one immediate and principal object of the believer to escape from damnation. Such was the religious atmosphere which Fox breathed from his childhood. He found it not life-giving, but stifling; and wandered in darkness and despair, until, as he believed, God Himself led him by His Spirit into the light and peace and joy of a perfect salvation. Then he dared to defy the whole array of the Protestant clergy, with his startling announcement: "Oh, no. It is not the Scriptures. It is the Spirit of God."

CHAPTER III.

THE APOSTLE OF THE INWARD LIGHT.

THE "Journal or Historical Account of the life, travels, sufferings, Christian experiences, and labour of love in the work of the ministry of that ancient, eminent, and faithful servant of Jesus Christ, GEORGE FOX, who departed this life in great peace with the Lord, the 13th of the 11th month, 1690," was left by him in manuscript, and by his desire published after his decease. The term "journal" is not altogether appropriate; for though it is evident that Fox wrote frequent, almost daily, memoranda during much of his later life, the earlier and more interesting and important portion of the narrative was written long subsequently to the experience recorded. Twenty years before his death, therefore under his direction or with his approbation, the collected writings of one of his followers were published, whom the editors boldly style on the title-page, "That true Prophet and Faithful Servant of God, Edward Burroughs." Long after, when the master's turn came, the surviving disciples, perhaps in the prudence of old age, did not accord to him the title of prophet: a noticeable omission which will come again to our remembrance in its place. Meantime, prophet or not, the autobiography of George Fox is a precious possession, worthy of a place on the book-shelf by the side of Augustine's Confessions: by "Grace

Abounding to the Chief of Sinners," which is John Bunyan's autobiography; and even by the side of the immortal "Pilgrim's Progress" itself. Bunyan and Fox indeed ought not only to be kept, but to be read together. Nearly of the same age, Bunyan being four years younger than Fox, both of them the children of labourers, and labourers themselves, one a shepherd, the other a tinker, both of them receiving the merest rudiments of education, they resembled each other in the extraordinary intensity of their religious experiences. Both waded for years through sloughs of despondency and valleys of the shadow of death; both emerged into the sunlight of a steadfast Christian faith, both became mighty preachers and prolific writers, and both suffered grievous persecution for their steadfast adherence to conscientious convictions. But the differences between the two outweighed their resemblances, and made them life-long antagonists. Bunyan heartily accepted the prevalent Calvinism, against which Fox rebelled. Bunyan was an imaginative genius, able to clothe his conceptions with personality, and to make them live and move and speak in fascinating allegory. Fox was no genius; but intellectually slow-witted and unimaginative; in speech and with the pen, clumsy, inartistic, tedious.¹ Yet, when we come to think of it, Bunyan's pilgrim is at best but a poor creature, though portrayed by a master's hand. Charming and instructive as the story is, we find upon reflection that we feel no great amount of reverence for its hero. This does no

¹ This criticism is based on a study of all Fox's writings. If the *Journal* alone is considered, it may appear undeserved. Portions of the personal narrative are written in a simple, natural style, at times powerful and pathetic.

discredited to the author's artistic faculty, for it was not his purpose to glorify his Christian. Bunyan painted the actual Christian of his day and of our day, the irresolute feeble creature whom we know so well, who saddens us by falling so immensely short of the ideal. At one stage, he falls asleep, at another he goes astray: to-day he fights Apollyon for his life; to-morrow he yields without a blow to Giant Despair. By grace of repeated help and stimulus from all quarters, now from Evangelist, again from Interpreter, fitted out by maidens, accompanied by friends, somehow or other he just manages to keep going on the right road; but we never feel sure of him until he is safe across the river. In Fox's journal we see another sort of Christian, one who is himself Evangelist, Interpreter, Great-heart, and Valiant-for-truth, not in fiction, but in living fact. Here is a Christian who for four years continuously fought with Apollyon and struggled through the valley of the shadow of death. Then, having won his way through the darkness to the light, for forty years he lived in the light, with the world, the flesh, and the devil held down under his feet. This man's sins do not tumble off his back, but are washed out of his heart: he carries no roll in his hand as a pledge that he will be saved at last; he is saved already by a divine Light shining ever in his heart, which drives away all the foul creatures of the dark, fills him with joy, and makes him invulnerable to all the assaults of the hosts of darkness. The difference between Bunyan's Pilgrim and Fox's journal is the difference between their religious beliefs. Bunyan wanted to be saved from hell; Fox wanted to be saved from sin. Bunyan believed that to get rid of sin he must wait until he got

to heaven. Fox believed that in the strength of Christ he could overcome sin in this life. Most of us, alas! from personal experience are inclined to side with Bunyan. We admire his *Pilgrim's Progress* so much because he is so true to nature, so like ourselves. Yet he must be a strange sort of Christian who can read through this journal of simple, sturdy, indomitable George Fox, "stiff as a tree and pure as a bell," whom no violence, no sufferings, could deflect one hair's-breadth from his faithfulness to truth and to Christ, whose voice rang out clear in the proclamation of his message, whether in the presence of frowning judges or furious mobs; whose practical wisdom was so great, and who moved on through the vicissitudes of a storm-tost life with a serene light of heavenly peace upon his brow—he must be a strange sort of Christian, I say, who does not love that man with a great love, and desire to be like him in the purity and strength of his Christian character. Whether George Fox had attained to moral perfection, I know not; but this at least is sure, that in his journal we have before us the image of a Christian hero and saint, approaching nearer the ideal of the Gospels than most who bear the name of saint. As he was the founder of quakerism, so it almost appears to have expired with him. Some sketch of the man is indispensable to a study of the doctrine which he taught. Only an outline sketch can be attempted here. Biographies of George Fox already exist, but all of them are based upon and owe their value to his own narrative; from which we shall quote as largely as our space permits: and to which we refer the student for the more complete picture.

After an introductory paragraph, his narrative begins;

“I was born in the month called July, in the year 1624, at Drayton in the Clay, in Leicestershire. My father's name was Christopher Fox; he was by profession a weaver, an honest man, and there was a seed of God in him. The neighbours called him Righteous Christer. My mother was an upright woman; her maiden name was Mary Lago, of the family of the Lagos, and of the stock of the martyrs. In my very young years I had a gravity and stayedness of mind and spirit, not usual in children; insomuch that when I have seen old men carry themselves lightly and wantonly towards each other, I have had a dislike thereof risen in my heart, and have said within myself, ‘if ever I come to be a man, surely I should not do so, nor be so wanton.’ When I came to eleven years of age, I knew pureness and righteousness, for while I was a child I was taught how to walk to be kept pure. . . . As I grew up, my relations thought to have made me a priest; but others persuaded to the contrary; whereupon I was put to a man that was a shoemaker by trade, and that dealt in wool, and used grazing, and sold cattle, and a great deal went through my hands. While I was with him he was blessed, but after I left him he broke and came to nothing. I never wronged man or woman in all that time; for the Lord's power was with me, and over me, to preserve me. While I was in that service I used in my dealings the word ‘Verily,’ and it was a common saying among people that knew me, ‘If George says “Verily,” there is no altering him.’ When boys and rude people would laugh at me, I let them alone, and went my way; but people had generally a love to me for my innocency and honesty.”

This is nearly all that is recorded of Fox's childhood and youth. William Penn tells us that his parents, especially his mother, who was a woman accomplished above most of her degree, endeavoured to bring him up in the way and worship of the nation; that is, in the Church by law established. The simplicity and thoughtfulness of the child, the gravity beyond his years, his indifference to boyish sports, and intense interest in spiritual matters, must have seemed to parental affection to mark their son out as one destined to serve in the ranks of the sacred priesthood. We know not the dissuasions which prevailed against this proposition; the cost of a University education it may have been; or, perhaps, apprehension that faithful ministers would have a hard time of it under the severe rule of Archbishop Laud, who was then at the zenith of his sinister reputation. Whatever the obstacle, the lore of the schools young Fox was not to acquire. The sheep-fold and the market-place were his class-rooms, where he studied his Bible, his own heart, and the ways of mankind. For some five or six years this lasted, until the boy had grown almost to manhood, and had proved his ability in business affairs; then came the Divine call which drove him out into the wilderness. Let him tell the tale himself.

"When I came towards nineteen years of age, I being upon business at a fair, one of my cousins, whose name was Bradford being a professor, and having another professor with him, came to me and asked me to drink part of a jug of beer with them, and I being thirsty, went in with them; for I loved any that had a sense of good, or did seek after the Lord. And when we had drunk a glass apiece, they began to drink healths, and

called for more drink, agreeing together, that he that would not drink should pay all. I was grieved that any that made profession of religion should do so. They grieved me very much, having never had such a thing put to me before, by any sort of people. Wherefore I rose up to be gone, and putting my hand into my pocket I took out a groat, and laid it down upon the table before them, and said, 'If it be so, I'll leave you.' So I went away; and when I had done what business I had to do, I returned home, but did not go to bed that night, nor could not sleep, but sometimes walked up and down, and sometimes prayed and cried to the Lord, who said unto me, 'Thou seest how young people go together into vanity, and old people into the earth, and thou must forsake all, both young and old, and keep out of all, and be as a stranger unto all' " ¹

This was the crisis of Fox's history, the parting of the ways, the turning point where the narrow rugged path of virtue and self-conquest divides from the broad easy road of self-indulgence and weak-minded acquiescence in the world's standard of morality. Sneer at him for a strait laced puritan: scoff at the preciseness which would not drink except to quench thirst, and thought it sin to quaff to the health of a political party or a pretty lass: it remains clear to the eye of wisdom that just here was for George Fox the strait gate which led to life eternal. Only an extra glass or two, what would it have mattered? A temporary excitement of the spirits, a pleasant sense of freedom from cares and self-control, a jolly song or two, with a sly wink at the comely wench who brought the liquor, and perhaps a momentary licence of the im-

¹ *Journal* I. 76.

agination to stray into pleasant but dangerous regions,—what was the harm of it? Youth must have its fling, and one cannot always be in a church, singing psalms. So we can imagine young Bradford and the other arguing, as they strolled arm in arm from the hostelry, with a slight unsteadiness of gait; and they may have even felt morally superior to the milk-sop who did not dare, once in a while, to loosen the reins a bit. Well—they took their way, and George Fox his. Whither theirs led, we know not. They may have kept within certain limits and jogged along to the end no worse than the most of us; but they heard no divine voice; not to them was it given to pass through darkness and tormenting fires and fathomless abysses of doubt and despondency, and thereafter to emerge into the light on the serene heights where the human soul dwells in blessed consciousness of oneness with the Eternal.

George Fox was of another spirit than theirs. With him religion was an all-embracing reality. He did not as yet understand much, but he knew at least, that hypocrisy is an abomination before God and man. To be one thing in church and another in the tavern was to him intolerable. It was not that a couple of young men should drink a little more than was good for them, which distressed him so sorely. It was that professors of religion should be hypocrites. How could he in such company, exposed to such temptations, attain to the holiness of character which he felt to be the one thing needful? So he grieved and prayed, and cried to the Lord, through the watches of the night, until before dawn the word of the Lord came to him, a voice which he believed to be divine, which bade him to forsake all,

and be as a stranger unto all. "At the command of God," he tells us, "on the ninth day of the seventh month, 1643, I left my relations, and broke off all familiarity or fellowship with old or young: and I passed to Lutterworth, where I stayed some time; and from thence I went to Northampton, where also I made some stay; then passed from thence to Newport Pagnel in Buckinghamshire, where after I had stayed awhile I went unto Barnet, and came thither in the fourth month, called June, 1644. And as I thus travelled through the countries, professors took notice of me, and sought to be acquainted with me, but I was afraid of them, for I was sensible they did not possess what they professed. Now during the time that I was at Barnet, a strong temptation to despair came upon me; and then I saw how Christ was tempted, and mighty troubles I was in; and sometimes I kept myself retired in my chamber and often walked solitary in the chace there, to wait upon the Lord."

For three or four years young Fox lived this secluded life, wandering from town to town, seeking counsel from experienced ministers, listening to all opinions, but attaching himself to none. He had become what was then known as a Seeker. These Seekers, who are frequently referred to in the literature of that day, and who have left a few fragmentary writings, were a pretty numerous class, who, after forsaking the National Church for the greater purity and freedom of the sects, had grown dissatisfied with these also, and abandoned all visible churches and societies, wandering up and down, as sheep without a shepherd. "These people," William Penn tells us, "were called Seekers by some, and the Family

of Love by others; because, as they came to the knowledge of one another, they sometimes met together, not formally to pray or preach, but to wait together in silence, and as anything rose in any one of their minds that they thought savoured of a divine spring, so they sometimes spoke." Many of the Seekers afterwards became Quakers; but before Fox began his public teaching some of the Seekers had become infected with libertine and antinomian ideas; and under the name of Ranters shocked all decent people by their licentious doctrines and immoralities. Fox soon came into collision with the sect, and reclaimed some of them. First, however, he had to undergo a long trial of darkness and temptations, which well-nigh drove him to despair.

From Barnet he went to London, but there he found no help. Though many great preachers taught there—Edmund Calamy, and "silver-tongued" William Bates, Samuel Clark, and Peter Vink, with many others—to Fox all was dark and under the chain of darkness. When we read in Calamy's sermon, preached in Westminster Abbey before the House of Lords on Christmas day, 1644, of which sermon Fox may have been a hearer, the description of the miserable state of religion in London at that time, we are the less surprised that the young Seeker could discern no light amid the darkness. Later on we shall see that Calamy's doctrine was not of a character to relieve Fox's mind. Leaving London, he returned home for a while, when his relations would have had him take a wife, but he told them he was but a lad, and must get wisdom. Others wanted him to enlist as a soldier. Displeased with these attempts to divert his mind from the great quest, Fox left home again and went

to Coventry, but soon returned, and betook himself to visiting the clergy of the neighbourhood. His parish priest applauded his Scripture knowledge, and repeated his ideas in his Sunday sermons, much to George's disgust. The priest of Mansetter bade him smoke tobacco and sing psalms. Another, living at Tamworth, was counted an experienced man, but Fox found him but like an empty hollow cask. Dr. Cradock of Coventry lost his temper because the unhappy lad, absorbed in his spiritual troubles, unwittingly trod upon the doctor's flower-bed as they were walking and talking in his garden. The priest of Macham advised physic and bleeding. Alas! poor Fox; among all these learned rabbis, not one understood his disease, not one could administer even temporary relief. This is the less to be wondered at, because at this time Fox himself, as his narrative shows, did not understand the nature and causes of his troubled state. He appealed to the priests to tell him what was "the ground of temptations and despair, and how troubles came to be wrought in man?" Again and again he groans out of the depth of his wretchedness that none "could speak to his condition." As he wandered through the land, lodging now a month here and again a few weeks there, many "professors," as he styles them, and many "tender," that is, conscientious people, took notice of the tall, quiet, melancholy youth, and would gladly have welcomed him into fellowship, for even in the midst of his misery there were momentary breaks in the clouds, and light from above shone through, when he would utter some startling pregnant saying which drew attention to him as to one who lived near to the source of inspiration: but he shrank back from the

admiration of those who could not help him. "My troubles continued," he tells us, "and I was often under great temptations, and I fasted much, and walked abroad in solitary places many days, and often took my Bible and went and sat in hollow trees and lonesome places till night came on, and frequently in the night walked mournfully about by myself: for I was a man of sorrows in the times of the first workings of the Lord in me."¹

If now we inquire what was the nature, what were the causes, of George Fox's mental conflicts, we must construct the answer for ourselves, for plain and explicit statement on this subject is not to be found in his pages. One peculiarity cannot be missed. Grievously as he complains of temptation, he barely acknowledges sin. Unlike Augustine and Bunyan, George Fox pours out no humiliating confession of immoralities and sins. Almost at the same time that this tall pale shepherd lad from Leicestershire, Bible in hand, was crouching, like a wounded animal in some hollow tree, bemoaning his misery, another young man, a tinker of Bedfordshire, was driven well-nigh distracted by his fear of damnation; and he who would understand the spirit of the puritan age, should by all means read "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners," in which, with the charm of genius, honest John Bunyan recounts in thrilling sentences the story of his awful terrors and his deliverance. Endowed with the imagination of a poet, Bunyan vivified the driest, hardest doctrines of Calvinism till they spoke, and hissed at, and stung him. However exaggerated his estimate of his own depravity, however purely imaginary the sin of "selling Christ" which was

¹ *Journal* I. 82.

the occasion of his most horrible alarm, there is nothing mysterious in his description of his case. Fear of hell was the horror which haunted him night and day; an awful apprehension that he was not one of the elect; doubts whether he had the right kind of faith, whether he had been effectually called, an intolerable dread that he had committed the unpardonable sin; these were the snake-headed furies which pursued him for years. George Fox, on the contrary, lies open to the suspicion of self-righteousness. In all this long chapter of lamentations we have to search carefully for an expression or two unmistakeably indicating a sense of guilt. He is painfully conscious of a nature at variance with itself, of "two thirsts" within him, the one after the creatures, the other after the Lord. He is tempted to think that he has sinned against the Holy Ghost, but he recognises it as a temptation. When he saw the natures of dogs, swine, and vipers, of Solomon and Egypt, within, in the hearts of wicked men, he cried to the Lord, saying, "Why should I be thus, seeing I was never addicted to commit those evils?" Yet it would be a misconception to imagine that he was a self-righteous Pharisee. In the crisis of his conflict, he acknowledges that "all are concluded under sin, and shut up in unbelief, as I have been." The lessons of childhood, the pious example and watchful care of parents, acting upon a sensitive conscience, had kept him singularly pure in outward conduct, but he felt the internal discord of a fleshly nature and a selfish will, struggling against the spirit, and knew that he too was a sinner, and "that all was done, and to be done, in and by Christ" who destroys the devil and all his works.¹

¹ *Journal*, I, 85.

Nevertheless it cannot be disputed that Fox was, comparatively, little troubled about damnation. In all his misery, he was seeking the truth, rather than personal safety. He was not haunted by fear of hell, nor stung by the remorse of a guilt-laden conscience; but oppressed by a sense of darkness and weakness which he felt, not for himself alone, but for the whole world. What he craves is light; he wants to know the truth that he may be free. While others shuddered at the bare mention of everlasting torments, and quailed before the terrible doctrines of election and reprobation, George Fox appears, so far as we can judge from this account of his temptations, hardly to have remembered these terrific conceptions. What distresses him is the spectacle of an evil world, a world in darkness, out of harmony with the Divine Law, going to destruction because the seeds of disease and death are within. He wanted deliverance, here and now, from the power of moral evil, deliverance perfect and complete; and those who offered to wretched man an inferior boon, a mere escape from deserved penalties, seemed to him deceivers and deceived. Until he attained to this salvation from darkness and sin, until he saw the truth which placed this salvation within the reach of all mankind, he was wretched. He attained it, and was filled with joy unspeakable.

Such, if we interpret him aright, was the character of the religious struggle, through which George Fox painfully fought his way during several years. What was the nature and method of his deliverance? One word expresses it; it came by revelation. He sought unto the priests, but neither they nor the dissenting preachers

could give him help. He pored over his Bible, until mind and memory were saturated with its contents; but "it is written" brought no healing comfort to his soul. Fastings and prayers abounded, and in almsgiving he was not slack, but salvation was not in these. When all else was unavailing, there came a voice, a vision, an "opening," an inward light, and the truth of God was revealed to him. It was, he had no shadow of doubt, a Divine command which had sent him forth upon his wanderings, but not until the third year did the first "revelation" come. Then the "openings" began, and by gradual steps he slowly emerged out of the stifling darkness, into the blessed light of life. The first revelation is so simple; it appears to us so obvious a truism; that to esteem it a "revelation" seems almost a sign of half-wittedness. To George Fox, however, it was a momentous experience, the time and place of which he can never forget. "About the beginning of the year 1646, as I was going to Coventry, and entering towards the gate, a consideration arose in me, how it was said that all Christians are believers, both Protestants and Papists; and the Lord opened to me that if all were believers, then they were all born of God, and passed from death to life, and that none were true believers but such; and though others said they were believers, yet they were not."¹ This, then, was the first revelation vouchsafed to George Fox! He sets it forth in his own clumsy round-about way; but expressed in a single proposition, it amounts simply to this, that all true believers are born of God, and passed from death unto life, that is, that salvation is an actual change in the man's own state of heart and life,

¹ *Journal*, I. 80.

not a bare legal change of relation to penalty. This is a mere commonplace of theology, as old as the pages of the New Testament; how then can it have been to George Fox a "revelation"? At present we are relating the history; and it is part of the history, that Fox accepted this as a revelation from God. Later on, we may review his revelations as a whole, and try to estimate their value. But it may be remarked here, in passing, that the orthodoxy of that day sharply, sometimes angrily, distinguished between justification and sanctification. All true believers, said orthodoxy, are justified by faith alone; and orthodoxy resented it as an insult to the sovereignty of the Deity, and a slight upon the merits of Christ's sacrifice, if the moral change wrought in the sinner's character were so much as mentioned in this connection. Hence it came to pass that the moral change hardly seemed necessary to salvation, however proper and desirable in itself. And as a matter of fact, the doctrine that believers may be, even ought to be, made perfectly holy in this life was regarded as rank heresy. It is true, the best of the Puritan divines were practically as zealous for holiness as George Fox himself; and it would be as unfair to accept his view of their teaching, as theirs of his. Nevertheless one can easily understand how George Fox may have stumbled over and struggled with these difficulties, during those years of darkness. A salvation which left the believer still a sinner seemed to him no salvation at all. When at length his eyes were opened, and he saw clearly that man's moral condition is no mere secondary consideration, but that its regeneration is itself the very salvation of God, is it so surprising that the slow-witted,

humble-minded peasant lad, should never for an instant imagine that his own wit and wisdom had discovered this glorious truth, should honestly believe that it was directly revealed to him by God himself?

Again a revelation came. "At another time, as I was walking in a field on a first-day morning, the Lord opened unto me that being bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ; and I stranged at it, because it was the common belief of the people; but I saw it clearly as the Lord opened it to me, and was satisfied, and admired the goodness of the Lord who had opened this thing unto me that morning."¹ *O, sancta simplicitas!* one is ready to exclaim; was this a revelation? Who ever believed that mere education and orlnation could make men priests in Christ's temple? Yet George Fox "stranged at it because it was the common belief of the people." We have another witness for that. Bunyan tells us that when he began to reform his vicious life, "I was so overrun with the spirit of superstition, that I adored and that with great devotion, even all things (both the high place, priest, clerk, vestment, service and what else) belonging to the church; counting all things holy that were therein contained, and especially the priest and the clerk most happy, and without doubt, greatly blessed, because they were the servants, as I then thought, of God, and were principal in the holy temple, to do His work therein. This conceit grew so strong in a little time upon my spirit, that had I but seen a priest (though never so sordid and debauched in his life) I should find my spirit fall under him, reverence him, and knit

¹ *Ibid.*

unto him ; yea, I thought, for the love I did bear unto them (supposing them the ministers of God) I could have laid down at their feet, and have been trampled upon by them ; their name, their garb, and work, did so intoxicate and bewitch me.”¹ Thus Bunyan amply confirms Fox’s statement as to the popular belief. From the time when he received this second revelation, George Fox, to the great grief of his relations, refused to attend with them at the parish church. Nor would he join with the dissenters, but would get into the orchard, or into the fields, with his Bible, by himself.

The third revelation struck at the popular reverence for the sacred edifices. “At another time it was opened in me, ‘That God who made the world, did not dwell in temples made with hands.’ This at first seemed a strange word, because both priests and people used to call their temples or churches, dreadful places, and holy ground, and the temples of God ; but the Lord showed me, so that I did see clearly that He did not dwell in these temples, which men had commanded and set up, but in people’s hearts ; for both Stephen and the Apostle Paul bore testimony that He did not dwell in temples made with hands, nor even in that which he had once commanded to be built, since He put an end to it, but that His people were His temple, and He dwelt in them. This opened in me as I walked in the fields to my relations’ house ; and when I came there, they told me that Nathaniel Stevens, the priest, had been there, and told them he was afraid of me for going after new lights ; and I smiled in myself, knowing what the Lord had opened in me, concerning him and his brethren ; but I told not

¹ *Grace Abounding*, Cassell’s edition, 1886, page 20.

my relations, who, though they saw beyond the priests, yet they went to hear them, and were grieved because I would not go also; but I brought them Scriptures, and told them there was an anointing within man to teach him, and that the Lord would teach His people Himself.”¹

These three earliest revelations have been recounted at length in the exact words of their recipient, and the quotations will be serviceable when we come to investigate the question whether Fox did really receive them from God, or was self-deceived. To continue our historical narrative; after these he had other and great openings, which he does not record, concerning the things written in the Apocalypse; but in spite of the openings, his mental distress continued. Yet he was not forsaken. “As I cannot declare the great misery I was in, it was so great and heavy upon me; so neither can I set forth the mercies of God unto me in all my misery.” The received theology, the Established Church, the dissenting preachers, public worship and the society of other Christians, he had abandoned all, and was now solitary with his Bible. “And when all my hope in them and in all men was gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do; then, O! then, I heard a voice which said: ‘There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition;’ and when I heard it, my heart did leap for joy. Then the Lord did let me see why there was none upon the earth that could speak to my condition; namely, that I might give Him all the glory, for all are concluded under sin, and shut up in unbelief as I had been, that Jesus Christ might have the pre-

¹ *Journal*, I. 80.

eminence, who enlightens and gives grace, and faith, and power; thus when God doth work who shall let it? and this I knew experimentally. My desires after the Lord grew stronger, and zeal in the pure knowledge of God, and of Christ alone, without the help of any man, book, or writing; for though I read the Scriptures that spake of Christ and of God, yet I knew Him not, but by revelation, as He who hath the Key did open, and as the Father of Life drew me to His Son by His Spirit; and then the Lord did gently lead me along, and did let me see His love, which was endless and eternal, and surpasseth all the knowledge that men have in the natural state, or can get by history or books, and that love did let me see myself as I was without Him; and I was afraid of all company, for I saw them perfectly where they were, through the love of God which let me see myself."¹ Now he was nearly through the dark valley. Now he begins his rapturous praise of the great theme of his prophecy, the Light within, the indwelling Christ. "Christ it was, who had enlightened me, that gave me His light to believe in, and gave me hope which is in Himself, revealed Himself in me, and gave me His Spirit, and gave me His grace, which I found sufficient in the deeps and in weakness."² Now the revelations came abundantly. Sometimes he heard, sometimes he saw. "Again I heard a voice which did say, 'Thou Serpent, thou dost seek to destroy the life, but canst not; for the sword which keepeth the tree of life shall destroy thee.'"³ Next it was a vision. "One day when I had been walking solitarily abroad, and was come home, I was taken up in the love of God, so that I could not but

¹ *Journal*, I, 83.² *Ibid.*, p. 84.³ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

admire the greatness of His love ; and while I was in that condition it was opened unto me by the eternal light and power, and I therein clearly saw that all was done, and to be done, in and by Christ.”¹ At this period, in the years 1647 and 1648, George Fox lived an ecstatic life. At intervals revelations ceased and the light was veiled, but even then his secret belief stayed firm, and hope held fast to its anchor. The doctrines he was to spend his life in proclaiming, came crowding in upon his soul, gradually assuming definite shape, and falling into order. Christ appears as the Light, enlightening every man which cometh into the world, that by faith all may become children of the light. His language glows with rhapsodical fervour, and once at least overpasses the bounds of sober reason. “Now was I come up in spirit through the flaming sword into the paradise of God. All things were new ; and all the creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond what words can utter. I knew nothing but pureness, and innocency, and righteousness, being renewed up into the image of God by Christ Jesus ; so that I say I was come up to the state of Adam, which he was in before he fell. The creation was opened to me ; and it was shewed me how all things had their names given them, according to their nature and virtue. And I was at a stand in my mind, whether I should practise physie for the good of mankind, seeing the nature and virtues of the creatures were so opened to me by the Lord Great things did the Lord lead me into, and wonderful depths were opened unto me, beyond what can by words be declared ; but as people come into subjection to the Spirit of God, and grow up

¹ *Journal*, I. 85.

in the image and power of the Almighty, they may receive the word of wisdom that opens all things, and come to know the hidden unity in the Eternal Being.”¹ This savours of Böhmenism: it is asserted indeed that Fox plagiarises a whole paragraph from the German theosophist. One is sorry to meet with it in George Fox, but it is due to him to point out that this particular bit of mysticism stands out like a fragment of far-travelled rock in a stratum with which it does not harmonise. This excepted, his most rapturous utterances are ordinary Christian feeling exalted to a white heat. After the long agony of darkness, doubt, and well-nigh despair, words fail him to express the beauty and joy of the light. Colder and duller natures may be disposed to criticise ecstasies they have never experienced, but surely the most frigid will, on reflection, allow that excess in loving and praising God is impossible. Let human emotion soar to its loftiest, it must fall short of the Infinite.

So George Fox passed out of darkness into the light of Christ, and learned the pure and perfect gospel which henceforth he was to proclaim for the reformation of an apostate church, and the salvation of mankind. Long as our account has been, it is much abridged from the original narrative. But enough has been cited to make it clear that Fox fully believed that he was the recipient of revelations from God. Lest there should be the shadow of a doubt on this point, let this quotation decide the question: “These things I did not see by the help of man, nor by the letter (though they are written in the letter,) but I saw them in the light of the Lord

¹ *Ibid.*, I, 95.

Jesus Christ, and by His immediate spirit and power, as did the holy men of God by whom the Holy Scriptures were written. Yet I had no slight esteem of the Holy Scriptures, but they were very precious to me, for I was in that spirit by which they were given forth; and what the Lord opened in me, I afterwards found was agreeable to them.”¹ The reader may conclude that poor George was labouring under an hallucination. This we do not now stay to discuss. First let us get the facts before us; and this fact is the foundation of all that follows: George Fox did verily believe and was sure that he was the recipient of divine inspiration as certainly as the prophets and apostles were. For this inspiration he boldly claimed infallibility. “Now when the Lord God and His Son Jesus Christ did send me forth into the world, to preach His everlasting gospel and Kingdom, I was glad that I was commanded to turn people to that inward light, spirit, and grace, by which all might know their salvation, and their way to God; even that divine spirit which would lead them into all truth, and which I infallibly knew would never deceive any.”²

¹ *Journal*, I. 101.

² *Ibid*, I. 102.

CHAPTER IV.

PROCLAMATION OF THE MESSAGE.

IN a retrospect of his work, written in 1676, Fox says that the Lord sent him forth in 1643; and records the progress of the truth in Leicestershire and Warwickshire in the two following years. According to this account his public ministry began when he quitted home and business; and was carried on during the period of his mental conflicts. The fuller narrative in his journal makes no mention of his preaching and gaining converts until 1647. William Penn's Preface to the Journal suggests an explanation of the discrepancy. During the years of his temptations, Fox, wandering in search of truth, occasionally fell in with little companies of religious people, who, like himself, were dissatisfied with all existing churches, and kept themselves apart, being known as Seekers, or the Family of Love. Fox sometimes sat among these in silence, and occasionally encouraged them to wait in patience, until light should dawn upon them. These brief utterances, the more impressive for their rarity, kindled a hope in the hearts of some of these Seekers that in the wistful melancholy youth God was preparing a teacher for them. After his revelations, Fox spoke more frequently and more fully; and in 1647 a dying man openly prophesied that he should be a great instrument in the hand of the Lord. Fox fell ill after

the prophecy, and appears to have been taken for dead. This was the last great wave of affliction, the "very ocean of darkness and death," from which he emerged to rejoice in a more glorious manifestation of the divine Love than had ever been given before. "And I saw into that which was without end, and things which cannot be uttered, and of the greatness and infiniteness of the Love of God, which cannot be expressed in words And I saw the harvest white, and the seed of God, lying thick in the ground, as ever did wheat that was sown outwardly, and none to gather it; and for this I mourned with tears. And a report went abroad of me that I was a young man that had a discerning spirit; whereupon many came to me from far and near, professors, priests and people; and the Lord's power brake forth; and I had great openings and prophecies; and spake unto them of the things of God, and they heard with attention and silence, and went away and spread the fame thereof."¹ In the next year, 1648, he was encouraged by a vision. "As I was sitting in a friend's house in Nottinghamshire (for by this time the power of God had opened the hearts of some to receive the word of life and reconciliation), I saw there was a great crack to go throughout the earth, and a great smoke to go as the crack went; and that after the crack there should be a great shaking; this was the earth in people's hearts, which was to be shaken before the seed of God was raised out of the earth. And it was so, for the Lord's power began to shake them, and great meetings we began to have, and a mighty power and work of God there was amongst people, to the astonishment of both people and priests."

¹ *Journal*, 1. 90.² *Ibid*, p. 91.

Thus he was fairly launched upon his ministry : impelled by an inward power mightier than himself, to ever bolder attacks upon the creeds and customs of all the churches in the land, until, as was narrated before, he challenged the priest in his pulpit, in the great church of Nottingham, and was forthwith consigned to prison. Henceforth for forty-two years he laboured incessantly in prison and out, until death brought rest. Our plan does not permit us to follow him step by step throughout his narrative, but we must select a few incidents, to illustrate the character of the man and his work.

We left him shut up in the "nasty stinking prison." That same night the magistrates had him before them, and after a long examination, the majority agreed in sending him back to gaol. But one of them was converted before the examination was concluded. This was one of the sheriffs, who immediately removed him from the prison to his own house. The sheriff's wife met Fox in the hall with the words, "Salvation is come to our house." Husband, children, servants, all were greatly affected. The prisoner became a revered guest, and the sheriff's house the resort of inquirers into the new doctrine. The marvellous power which accompanied the teaching is seen in the case of the sheriff himself. Remembering that he had wronged a woman in the way of trade, he sends for her, openly confesses the wrong, and makes restitution. The next market-day he was walking with Fox in his chamber, when a conviction seized him that he must go and preach to the people. Out he went on the instant, in his slippers, as he was, and preached repentance in the market, and through the streets. The example was infectious.

Other townsmen were impelled to exhort the mayor and the magistrates to repent; to which they replied by removing Fox from the sheriff's house into the common gaol. When the assize came, a friend offered to be his substitute, body for body, life for life. On the other hand, the opposition became furious, and threatened violence; so that the governor of the Castle had to send soldiers to disperse the people. These scenes in Nottingham fairly represent the early part of Fox's ministry: great stirrings of spirit it aroused, sudden and irresistible convictions, producing immediate practical results. The wrong-doer made restitution; the priest forsook his benefice; the soldier broke his sword; the young heir risked his inheritance, and was turned into the streets; the persecutor became a Quaker; and the persecuted joyfully took the spoiling of their goods, the loss of their liberty, and of life itself, for the sake of that which they believed to be a message from God. Those who did not receive the doctrine raged against it in uncontrollable fury. Priests and people, magistrates and mob, flung themselves upon the blasphemous heretics, broke up their meetings, beat and stoned the preachers, shut them up in gaol, resolved to crush the hateful sect in its infancy: but the stormier the blasts of persecution, the more widely the flames of the new teaching spread.

Released from Nottingham gaol, Fox travelled as before in the work of the Lord. At Mansfield he healed and converted a mad-woman:¹ then he was moved to go to the steeple-house there and declare the truth to the priest and the people. Imprisonment in his case

¹ *Journal*, I. 107.

having no deterrent effect, they tried at Mansfield what bodily punishment would do. "The people fell upon me in great rage, and struck me down, and almost stifled and smothered me; and I was cruelly beaten and bruised by them with their hands, bibles, and sticks. Then they hauled me out (though I was scarcely able to stand) and put me into the stocks, where I sat some hours; and they brought dog-whips and horse-whips threatening to whip me. And after some time they had me before the magistrate, at a knight's house, where were many great persons, who, seeing how evilly I had been used, after much threatening, set me at liberty. But the rude people stoned me out of the town, for preaching the word of life to them. And I was scarce able to go, or well to stand, by reason of the ill-usage I had received; yet with much ado I got about a mile from the town, and then I met with some people that gave me something to comfort me, because I was inwardly bruised; but the Lord's power soon healed me again. And that day some people were convinced of the Lord's truth, and turned to His teaching, at which I rejoiced."¹ Rough usage such as this soon became a common experience; and during the coming years, his imprisonments were his vacations from mob-violence. His life was repeatedly threatened, and more than once, by calm superiority to fear he disarmed the foe. When a man ran at him with a naked rapier, and set it just at his side, Fox, looking steadfastly on him, said, "Alack for thee, poor creature! what wilt thou do with thy carnal weapon? It is no more to me than a straw."²

Within a year or so after the release from Nottingham

¹ *Journal*, I. 108.

² *Ibid.* p. 111.

gaol, Fox was again in prison at Derby. His account of the occasion is too characteristic to be omitted: "Then coming to Derby I lay at a doctor's house, whose wife was convinced; and so were several more of the town. And as I was walking in my chamber the bell rung, and it struck at my life at the very hearing of it; so I asked the woman of the house what the bell rung for; and she said there was to be a great lecture that day, and many of the officers of the army and priests and preachers were to be there that day, and a colonel that was a preacher. Then was I moved of the Lord to go up to them; and when they had done I spake to them what the Lord commanded me, and they were pretty quiet. But there came an officer, and took me by the hand, and said I must go before the magistrates, and the other two that were with me. It was about the first hour after noon that we came before them. They asked me why we came thither; I said, God moved us so to do; and I told them God dwells not in temples made with hands. I told them also, all their preaching, baptism, and sacrifices would never sanctify them, and bid them look unto Christ in them, and not unto men; for it is Christ that sanctifies. Then they ran into many words; but I told them they were not to dispute of God and of Christ, but to obey Him. And the power of God thundered amongst them, and they did fly like chaff before it. They put me in and out of the room often, hurrying backward and forward often; for they were from the first hour until the ninth at night in examining me. And sometimes they would tell me, in a deriding manner, that I was taken up in raptures. At last they asked me whether I was sanctified; I answered yes, for I was in

the paradise of God. Then they asked me if I had no sin; I answered Christ my Saviour has taken away my sin, and in Him there is no sin. They asked how we knew that Christ did abide in us; I said by His Spirit that He hath given us. They temptingly asked if any of us were Christ; I answered, Nay, we were nothing, Christ was all. They said, if a man steal is it no sin? I answered, all unrighteousness is sin. So when they had wearied themselves in examining me, they committed me and one other man¹ to the House of Correction in Derby for six months as blasphemers.”² The mittimus states that they were “charged with the avowed uttering and broaching of divers blasphemous opinions, contrary to a late Act of Parliament.” One of the committing magistrates was Justice Bennett, “who was the first that called us Quakers, because I bid them tremble at the word of the Lord.”³ In the House of Correction Fox discovered that he could speak by the pen. In brief pithy letters he warned magistrates, priests, and people. The justices soon had had enough of him, but it was always easier to put George Fox in prison than to get him out. The Derby magistrates did not know their man, so they bade his gaoler let him out with liberty to walk a mile, hoping that he would walk away altogether. His relations offered bail to the amount of a hundred pounds⁴ that he should not return to Derby to attack the priests, but Fox would not accept liberty on these terms. His

¹ One John Fleetwell was Fox's companion: his name appears in the mittimus. He was a Phable, who scrambled out of the wrong side of the sioch. See *Journal*, I, 119.

² *Journal*, I, 112.

³ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁴ An amount which shows that they were not poor.

plain-speaking epistles continued to annoy the magistrates, who caught at what seemed an excellent chance of getting rid of him. "Now the time of my commitment to the House of Correction being very near out, and there being many new soldiers raised, the Commissioners would have made me captain over them ; and the soldiers cried they would have none but me. So the keeper of the House of Correction was commanded to bring me up before the Commissioners and soldiers in the market-place ; and there they proffered me that preferment (as they called it), asking me if I would not take up arms for the Commonwealth against Charles Stuart. I told them I knew whence all wars did arise, even from the lust, according to James's doctrine ; and that I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars. But they courted me to accept of their offer, and thought I did but compliment with them. But I told them I was come into the covenant of peace, which was before wars and strifes were. They said they offered it in love and kindness to me, because of my virtue ; and such like flattering words they used. But I told them, if that was their love and kindness, I trampled it under my feet. Then their rage got up, and they said : ' Take him away, gaoler, and put him into the dungeon amongst the rogues and felons.' So I was had away, and put into a lousy, stinking place, without any bed, amongst thirty felons, where I was kept almost half a year, unless it were at times ; for they would sometimes let me walk in the garden, having a belief that I would not go away."¹ What a loss to the army, and disappointment to the clergy was that ! If Fox could have accepted, no stouter

¹ *Journal*, I. 128.

captain would have led in the uphill charge at Dunbar, or at Worcester fight. Preaching captains and colonels were plentiful already: one more would be no such matter, and when the army marched he must move with it; besides, there was the chance that some providential bullet or pike-thrust might effectually silence this troublesome controversialist. Fox, too, would have found his advantage in it, for the most furious priest-led mob would shrink from assaulting that tall commanding figure, with steel cap on head and broadsword at side. But Fox's peace principles were well known, and probably his adversaries hoped to diminish his influence by convicting him of inconsistency, but they were disappointed.

In the felon's gaol Fox observed the corrupting influence of long imprisonments, in which the prisoners learned badness one of another; and addressed to the judges an appeal that speedy justice should be done. He also intervened on behalf of a young woman in the gaol, who, for robbing her master of some money, was being tried for her life. Fox wrote to the judge and jury about her, showing them how contrary it was to the law of God in old time to put people to death for stealing, and moving them to show mercy. The poor creature was condemned, and brought to the gallows, but when blindfolded on the ladder a reprieve arrived. In the prison she was converted, and became a Quaker. These are among the many proofs that George Fox was no mere religious fanatic. He had a genuine pity for all human woes, and a burning hatred of injustice of every kind.

When the royal army was marching towards Worcester, and fresh levies were being made, Justice Bennett tried to force Fox to accept the press-money. This attempt also

failing, the magistrates could not tell what to do with him, and at length they unceremoniously turned him out of gaol, after he had been a prisoner almost a year. Set free again, Fox was immediately at his work, and spent about four years in the northern counties, gathering churches, and bringing them into order. His fame spread far and wide: among the common folk he was regarded with awe, as one possessed of mysterious powers. Sometimes being inhospitably refused shelter, at other times from choice or indifference, he so frequently passed the night in the open air, that the report got abroad that he could not lie in a bed.¹ Another report alleged that he rode a great black horse, which could carry him from place to place with supernatural speed. One day he suddenly appeared in Beverley church, and on the morrow a great lady of the place related to Justice Hotham how an angel or spirit came into their church, spake the wonderful things of God to the astonishment of all, and then passed away, none knowing whence it came or whither it went. On that occasion he must have been carried up in spirit to a vision of heavenly things, the description of which entranced the hearers. But he could be terrible also. Judge Bennett called them Quakers because, as he said, Fox bade them tremble: he might more aptly have said, because Fox made them tremble. At Ulverstone one of the clergymen thought that the church shook while Fox was preaching; and he hastened out for fear it should fall upon his head. In Kendal, on the market day, Fox went through the town, warning the people of the mighty day of the Lord, and "so dreadful was the power of God that was upon me, that people

¹ *Journal*, I. 153.

flew like chaff before me into their houses.”¹ He was accused of gaining converts by bewitching them. Popular report attributed some mysterious power to the Quakers, so that they were regarded with alarm. Christopher Story, an early convert, relates that the mere approach of two Quaker preachers filled him with a mighty dread, so that he had much ado to refrain from shaking and trembling in their presence.

Fox believed that he possessed the gift of discernment of spirits, and he used it freely, at times offensively. One woman he publicly accused of witchcraft; and afterwards the people told him that she was generally so accounted. To another he said, “Thou hast been a harlot;” and she, he tells us, was afterwards convinced of God’s truth, and became a Friend. Sitting down at table, in a house where he had been civilly received, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “Eat not the bread of such as have an evil eye.” He got up immediately and would eat nothing. The woman of the house was a Baptist. We are not told that she became a Quaker. In the case of some of his opponents Fox used this gift with an uncomplimentary frankness. “There came to Judge Fell’s that Captain Sands beforementioned, endeavouring to incense the Judge against me, for he was an evil-minded man, and full of envy against me; and yet he could speak high things, and use the Scripture words, and say, ‘Behold I make all things new.’ But I told him, then he must have a new God, for his god was his belly. Besides him, thither came also that envious justice John Sawrey; and I told him his heart was rotten, and he was full of hypocrisy to the brim. Several other

¹ *Journal*, I. 172.

people also came, whose states the Lord gave me a discerning of: and I spake unto their conditions.”¹ In his denunciations of the beneficed clergy, and the dissenting ministers who received salaries, as hirelings, false shepherds, devouring the flock, Fox appears in his least amiable aspect. Even among these there was the distinction of bad and worse. The receipt of the following epistle by the Ulverstone clergyman, William Lampitt, was not calculated to conciliate. “The word of the Lord to thee, O Lampitt! who art a deceiver, surfeited and drunk with the earthly spirit . . . a blind leader of the blind, a beast wallowing and tumbling in the earth, and in the lust, one that is erred from the spirit of the Lord, who art of old ordained for condemnation, a right hypocrite in the steps of the Pharisees, and in the way of thy fathers, the hypocrites, which our Lord Jesus Christ cried woe against. Such with the light thou art seen to be, and by the light art comprehended; which is thy condemnation who hatest it, and will be so eternally, except thou repent . . . And when thou art in thy torment remember thou wast warned in thy life-time . . .”² This might pass for one of Ludovick Muggleton’s sentences of damnation, were it not that George Fox holds out a possibility of escape by repentance. This readiness to consign antagonists to everlasting torment was common to all churches in that age. Repulsive as it is, we must not be so utterly disgusted by George Fox’s employment of the weapon, as we should be if it were wielded with like personality to-day.

Terrible in his denunciations of wickedness, and pitiless against hypocrisy, Fox was naturally of a quiet,

¹ *Journal*, I. 170.

² *Journal*, I. 189

shrinking, loveable disposition ; and he powerfully attracted those who came under the influence of this more winning side of his character. "When I first went to him," says one of his converts, "he treated me in meekness like a lamb. He took me by the hand and said : Young man, this is the word of the Lord to thee. There are three scriptures thou must witness to be fulfilled ; first, thou must be turned from darkness to light ; next thou must come to the knowledge of the glory of God ; and then thou must be changed from glory to glory. And this made such an impression on me that I was fully persuaded that he was sent of God ; and the word of life was in him ; and what he then said unto me was more effectual than all I had ever heard from any teachers before."¹ Another disciple asserts that there was not a meeker man upon earth. Thomas Ellwood says : "I knew him not till the year 1660, from that time to the time of his death, I knew him well, loved him dearly, honoured him truly. . . . He was valiant for the truth, bold in asserting it, patient in suffering for it, unwearied in labouring in it, steady in his testimony to it. . . . Graceful he was in countenance, manly in personage, grave in gesture, courteous in conversation ; . . . a severe reprovcr of hard and obstinate sinners ; a mild and gentle admonisher of such as were tender and sensible of their failings : not apt to resent personal wrongs, easy to forgive injuries ; but zealously earnest, where the honour of God, the prosperity of truth, the peace of the Church, were concerned : very tender, compassionate, and pitiful he was to all that

¹ John Taylor's testimony ; prefixed to *God's Epistles*, Vol. I. p. 6. Philadelphia edition.

were under any sort of affliction.”¹ Such was George Fox, as Ellwood saw him. Such we may discern him to have been, from his own writings, from the testimony of his friends, and from the silence of his foes, who in their bitterest hatred of his doctrines leave the moral character of the man unassailed. In the first fiery zeal of youth, and in the calmer force of age, he was a man who, whatever view we may take of his inspiration and of his theology, stands among the noblest in the ranks of sainthood, and more than many, reminds us of the character of the Master in whom he believed.

¹ Prefixed to *Journal*. Edition 1827, page lxxi.

CHAPTER V.

THE SUBSTANCE OF QUAKER DOCTRINE.

A NEW prophet had arisen—a false prophet, cried the orthodox—a true prophet of God, exclaimed hundreds and thousands, who asserted that they themselves knew in their own experience a similar inspiration. Within ten years quaker meetings were established all over England, and some in Ireland and Scotland. Soon the new doctrine spread to Germany and Holland, and in the American colonies. What was this new gospel, or new edition of the old gospel, and wherein lay its attractive force? George Fox's revelations were the seed-thoughts of his teaching; but a fuller consideration of its character will help us to understand how it won such speedy and signal success.

The first thing that strikes us in George Fox's preaching is its pre-eminently practical character. Christianity is above all things a moral force; but somehow or other the theological systems of Romanism and Protestantism have often been popularly construed as methods whereby the absence of morality can be condoned. The original impulse which drove George Fox into solitude was his horror at the inconsistency of professedly religious people. When his conflict was over, and he returned to proclaim the everlasting gospel, morality was not to him a consequence of Christ's salvation, but

identical with it. His preaching was as much concerned about right conduct as about true theology. To him the distinction between things secular and things religious, seemed not to exist. He preached in the market as often as in the church, and about the market as much as about the church. At the outset of his ministry, he happened to be at Mansfield when the justices were sitting at an inn, supervising the hiring of servants.¹ Admonished of the Lord to go and speak to the justices that they should not oppress the servants in their wages, Fox drew near to the inn, but finding a company of fiddlers there, he shrank back, concluding to wait for a more seasonable opportunity. In the morning, the justices were gone. When the young prophet heard that, he tells us that he was struck blind. Standing there, he inquired of the innkeeper where the justices were to sit that day, and when his sight began to return, he ran thither as fast as he could, and faithfully delivered his message. Thenceforth he never dared to delay, though he found the duty painful, but went to the courts to cry for justice, and to the public-houses to warn the publican not to let people have more drink than would do them good. In fairs and in markets he protested against deceitful merchandise, cheating and cozening, warning all to deal justly and to speak the truth, to let their yea be yea, and their nay be nay, and to do unto others as they would have others do unto them; and forewarning them of the great and terrible day of the Lord, which would come upon them all. Equally practical, though more in the spirit of his age than ours, was his testifying against May games and

¹ *Journal*, I. 94.

feasts, music and stage plays, "for they burthened the pure life, and stirred up people's minds to vanity."¹ He visited schools to warn schoolmasters and mistresses to teach their pupils sobriety in the fear of the Lord; and did not neglect to exhort parents and heads of households to a faithful discharge of their duties towards children and servants. George Fox began with this kind of preaching, and stuck to it to the end. If people would be Christians, they should be moral Christians, for to none else would he concede the name. His latest biographer regards Fox especially as a social reformer;² and undoubtedly Fox brought religion to bear upon social life with extraordinary persistence and success, and has stamped his followers with this characteristic to the present day. But of social reform or political reform, independently of religious reform, George Fox never so much as dreamt. With him all life was a unity, all life was religion, and only by pure religion did he expect society and government to be regenerated.

The superficial peculiarities of quakerism, by exciting the sense of the ridiculous, are largely responsible for diverting attention from its essential doctrines. Its oddities were disliked from the first, but in Fox's day it was their doctrines, not their eccentricities, which brought upon the Quakers the execrations of Christendom. Some of the peculiarities of the Quakers belong rather to the second generation than the first. In condemning gaudy and foppish attire, Fox was only echoing the sentiments of the Puritans. He wore no peculiar garb himself, ex-

¹ *Journal*, I. 191.

² A. C. Bickley, *George Fox and the Early Quakers*, 1881.

cept at one time the leather breeches, and he imposed none upon his followers. The quaker peculiarities of speech were not at first so peculiar as they by lapse of time became. Fox stiffly adhered to verbal exactness in the use of the personal pronouns, but in this he followed the example of a portion at least of the Baptists. It must be remembered also that it was then the ordinary custom to use "thou" and "thee" between equals and friends and to inferiors; and the early Quakers adhered to grammar, whereas their successors affectedly employed "thee" as a nominative case.¹ The Baptists also anticipated the Quakers in their objection to the heathen names of the months and days of the week. Fox was deficient in moral perspective. His refusal to doff his hat to social superiors exhibits a sturdy independence of character like that which inspired Burns's song. But while we admire, we have a feeling that Fox raised these minor moralities almost to a level with the weightier matters, justice, mercy, and truth. No doubt Fox was greatly influenced by the Scriptural precepts condemning respect of persons, and commanding to honour all men.² Whether or not he made too much of these lesser matters—and Fox would not to save his life swerve a hair's-breadth from the line of his conscientious conviction—it would be a mistake to suppose they were prominent in his public teaching. He held his opinions, not loosely, but tenaciously, and would maintain them against all comers; but it was not by dwelling on points of grammar and etiquette that he shook the nations.

¹ *The Liberty of the Spirit*, &c., by John Rutt, 1756, page 60.

² James ii. 1, 9; 1 Peter ii. 17

War Fox regarded as incompatible with perfect Christianity, but we do not hear that he required soldiers to give up their profession. William Penn, when he was converted, was a courtier and a gallant, who had borne himself with conspicuous courage in a duel, and had held military command under Henry Cromwell in Ireland. Long after he had turned Quaker, he still, like other gentlemen, wore his sword. Uneasy in his mind, very likely in consequence of the criticisms of his brethren, he consulted Fox on the subject, who advised him to wear his sword as long as he could. Oaths, even in courts of justice, Fox utterly refused, regarding them as forbidden by Christ's command. Orthodoxy at that time was rigidly Sabbatarian, but Fox on the contrary was thoroughly Pauline in this respect. In regard to the two sacraments he went beyond Paul, holding that they were temporary ordinances, intended for the transition period while the infant Church was hampered by its Jewish swaddling-clothes, but unnecessary and unsuitable in a purely spiritual religion. Men and women were equal in the Church, and the women might preach as freely as the men. Tithes were abolished under the New Testament, and it was sinful to pay them. It was wrong for a minister to receive payment for preaching the Gospel, whether from the state or from his own congregation. All these may be included as parts of that practical religion of which George Fox became an example. But it would be a great mistake to look upon these particular practices as the essence of Fox's teaching and the source of its power. No mere peculiarities of speech, opinion, or behaviour could win acceptance for a new prophet; nor would un-

usual zeal for veracity, honesty, chastity, and the other moralities be sufficient alone to produce the enthusiastic faith with which his message was received. We must go deeper for the causes of his success, and we cannot do better than enquire of his earliest and most devoted followers, why he seemed to them a messenger from heaven?

In 1652, George Fox entered Westmoreland, preaching as he went, and passed on to Furness. A friend took him to lodge at Swarthmore near Ulverstone, the residence of Judge Fell,¹ where it was the custom to entertain ministers and religious people. The next day, being a lecture or fast day, Mrs. Fell and her children went to church, but Fox would not accompany them. He waited until the prayers were over, and entered when the hymn before sermon was being sung. Let Mrs. Fell relate what ensued. "And when they had done singing, he stood up upon a seat or form, and desired that he might have liberty to speak: and he that was in the pulpit said he might. And the first words that he spoke were as follows. 'He is not a Jew that is one outward; neither is that circumcision which is outward, but he is a Jew that is one inward; and that is circumcision which is of the heart.' And so he went on and said, how that Christ was the Light of the world, and lighteth every man that cometh into the world; and that by this light they might be gathered to God, &c. And I stood up in my pew, and I wondered at his doctrine, for I had never heard such

¹ The house still stands unchanged. They show the room where the family sat, and George Fox with them, and the window from which he preached to an audience in the orchard below.

before. And then he went on and opened the Scriptures, and said the Scriptures were the Prophets' words, and Christ's words, and the Apostles' words, and what, as they spoke, they enjoyed and possessed, and had it from the Lord: and said, then what had any to do with the Scriptures, but as they came to the Spirit that gave them forth? You will say—Christ saith this, and the Apostles say this—but what can'st thou say? Art thou a child of light, and hast walked in the light? and what thou speakest, is it inwardly from God? &c. This opened me so, that it cut me to the heart; and then I saw clearly we were all wrong. So I sat me down in my pew again, and cried bitterly; and I cried in my spirit to the Lord, 'We are all thieves: we are all thieves: we have taken the Scriptures in words, and know nothing of them in ourselves.' So that served me, that I cannot well tell what he spake afterwards: but he went on in declaring against the false prophets, and priests, and deceivers of the people. And there was one, John Sawrey, a justice of the peace and a professor, that bid the churchwarden take him away; and he laid his hands on him several times, and took them off again, and let him alone; and then after awhile he gave over, and came to our house again that night. And he spoke in the family amongst the servants, and they were all generally convinced, as William Caton, Thomas Salt-house, Mary Askew, Anne Clayton, and several other servants. And I was stricken into such a sadness I knew not what to do, my husband being from home. I saw it was the truth, and I could not deny it; and I did as the Apostle saith, 'I received the truth in the love of it,' and it was opened to me so clear, that I had

never a tittle in my heart against it : but I desired the Lord that I might be kept in it : and then I desired no greater portion."¹ So Margaret Fell became a quaker, and seventeen years afterwards, when Judge Fell had been dead more than ten years, she became Fox's wife. She was a woman of beautiful spirit and great courage, toiling and suffering much for her faith, to which she was steadfast until death. From this account of her conversion, some may infer that previously she had been a formalist, without any heart-felt religion. But there is nothing in the narrative to support this view ; she does not blame herself alone, but cries out that they were all thieves, thus including all those to whom she had looked up as teachers and examples. If, however, any doubt hangs over her meaning, let us compare the testimony of another disciple.

Before Fox reached Swarthmore, he preached in Kendal, in the town hall ; thence he went to Underbarrow, where he met a lad of sixteen or seventeen years, with whom he had great reasonings. This was Edward Burroughs, who became an ardent believer and fervent preacher of quakerism. For eight years he was the quaker apostle of London, where he died a martyr's death at the age of 28. Edward Burroughs was not a formalist. From the age of twelve he was intensely earnest in religion, following the strictest sect of the puritans, until he became a seeker. "Then it pleased the Lord," he says, "to send his true and faithful servant and messenger, George Fox, who spake the language which I understood not." There were great reasonings between them, according to Fox's journal, but Burroughs

¹ Testimony of Margaret Fox, prefixed to the *Journal*, p. liv.

soon caught the meaning of the new gospel. "First the Lord brought us to know and see perfectly that God has given to us, every one of us in particular, a Light from Himself, shining in our hearts and consciences: which Light, Christ His Son, the Saviour of the world, had lighted every man, and all mankind withal: and we found this Light to be a sufficient teacher to lead us to Christ Jesus, from whence this Light came, and thereby gave us to receive Christ and to witness Him to dwell in us; and in all things we found the Light which we were enlightened withal, and all mankind, (which is Christ) to be alone, and only sufficient to bring to life and eternal salvation."¹

Another of these Kendal converts, Francis Howgill, who also became an eminent preacher and was Burroughs' colleague in London, relates a similar story of his own conversion. He too from a child set his heart to know God, read much and prayed much, but still was self-condemned. He complained to the clergy, and they told him that sin was not imputed to believers: that Christ had taken it away, but that the guilt should remain while he lived. This he thought a miserable condition, and he left them for the Independents, and these for the Baptists. "But still all said, the letter was the word and rule, and Christ at a distance and with out had done all." Some preached free-will, and some opposed it. Some proclaimed free grace: that all sin, past, present, and to come, was done away: only believe and all is finished. But he, poor fellow, and heard a voice, saying, "His servant thou art to whom thou obeyest," and found no peace. When George Fox appeared, he

¹ Preface to George Fox's *Great Mystery*.

too received him as a messenger of God, bringing a gospel never conceived of before. "Immediately as soon as I heard one declare that the Light of Christ in man was the way to Christ, I believed the Eternal word of truth, and that of God in my conscience sealed to it."¹

These instances may suffice to make it clear, how it was that Fox's message came to human hearts as a new gospel, unimagined before, but once heard, commending itself as the very truth of God. They had been brought up in an awful reverence for the bible, as the only Word of God to them: but the doctrines which the clergy extracted from its pages, and delivered as of divine authority, did not seem to them to be divine: and they knew not where to look for a way out of their perplexities. Uprose one in their midst and told them that God had spoken to him, and was speaking to them, as surely as He spoke to prophets and apostles of old: they heard and wondered, and believed, because they found it even so. God was speaking, had long been speaking, in their hearts, though hitherto they had not known that it was their Father's voice. They had been taught that their salvation was purchased for them by a great transaction between the Son of God and the Father, which was effected sixteen hundred years before at Calvary, outside Jerusalem. The whole transaction was external to themselves, far off in the invisible, and their connection with it seemed remote, arbitrary, and uncertain. George Fox cried out among them, "Do ye not see the Blood of Christ? See it in your hearts, to sprinkle your hearts and consciences from dead works, to serve the living

¹ Works of Francis Howgill. "The Inheritance of Jacob discovered." Pages 39 *et seq.*

God.”¹ Then they like himself “saw it, the blood of the New Covenant, how it came into the heart.” They had been taught the duty of repentance, of forsaking sin, and that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; but in the same breath they had been warned that holiness was unattainable in this life. But George Fox told them that “Christ did not die for sinners, that they should live all their life-time in sin, and die in their sins.” “There is a time for men to see they have sin, and have sinned, and a time to confess and forsake it; and there is a time to witness the blood of Christ cleansing from all sin, and there is a time to witness the truth born of God, which doth not commit sin.”² They heard, and the joy of a great hope dawned upon their souls, like the light of the morning sun after a night of evil dreams. Fox’s gospel was the gospel of Light: the light within, Christ the Light. One can imagine how his face shone as he spoke of the blessed Light in which he himself dwelt in unspeakable peace. “O, therefore, you that know the light, walk in the light! For there are children of darkness that will talk of the light and of the truth and not walk in it; but the children of the light love the light and walk in the light.” Quakers, the world called them, but they called themselves “children of truth” and “the children of the light.” The children of the Light—they loved the name, for it expressed an inward reality.

Thus the reception of Fox’s message is not unintelligible to us. Its rejection also can be understood with-

¹ *Journal*, I, 92.

² Fox’s Works, *The Great Mystery*, page 89; see also *Journal*, Vol. II., page 185.

out believing that all who refused the new doctrine were lovers of darkness more than light, because their deeds were evil. To many a grave, godly, and learned divine whose own experience confirmed to him the unique and incomparable inspiration and supreme authority of the Scriptures, which was the tradition of the Church, and the cardinal doctrine of the Reformation, this talk of the inward teacher, the Christ within, seemed dangerous heresy. Ecclesiastical history showed him how the same deceitful tenlency had appeared oftentimes before, a fruitful seed of a pernicious crop of errors. Not being gifted, as Fox supposed himself to be, with the discernment of spirits, we cannot judge how far the Rev. William Lampitt of Ulverstone, the Rev. Nathaniel Stevens of Drayton, and others who came under Fox's condemnation were influenced by unworthy motives. We know that the best of the clergy, such men as Baxter, Owen, and Calamy, were leading antagonists of quakerism; and in due course must set forth a summary of their arguments against it. First of all we want to get a clear conception of what Fox actually believed and taught: and already we have seen enough to account for the rapid establishment of the new Church.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRUTH TRIUMPHANT.

GEORGE FOX had not to wait for success: it sprang forth to meet him. When he appeared the harvest was ripe, and in some cases the mature fruit dropped into his hands without his effort. Startling as his doctrines may appear to some of us, they were not by any means entire novelties in that age. Two Quakers of this nineteenth century, Robert Barclay,¹ a descendant of the great apologist of quakerism, and William Tallack,² have laboured to prove that George Fox was in no one particular entirely an originator; and it must be acknowledged that their labours have been largely successful. Even his central doctrine, the Light within, the supremacy of the Spirit's teaching, had been anticipated. What made Fox the leader of a great religious movement was the strength of his conviction that *he* had received these truths, not from men, but immediately from God, and that he had a divine commission to publish them for the regeneration of an apostate Christendom. The truths by the open promulgation of which he shook the nations, had been secretly pondered by a few retired spirits, or

¹ *Tracts, &c. in Support of the Christian Faith*, by Robert Barclay, London, 1873. As in the following pages he will frequently be quoted, let him be distinguished as Robert Barclay, the younger.

² William Tallack's *George Fox, &c.* London, 1868.

timidly divulged to small private gatherings; but rather as pious speculations than solid certainties, able to bear the common daylight. Until George Fox appeared no one had the courage to defy, in their name, the whole strength of the dominant orthodoxy, supported as it was by the magistracy. They were waiting for their leader, and when he raised the standard and blew the trumpet, they hastened to his side. Some, indeed, recognised the coming prophet before he had finally emerged from his long conflict with the powers of darkness. Elizabeth Hooten, afterwards the first woman-preacher of the Friends, who in old age twice crossed the Atlantic, endured much grievous usage, and braved death itself in the service of the truth, attached herself to George Fox when he was still in the very middle of his woes. Captain Amos Stoddard ranged himself on his side, crying, "Let the youth speak: hear the youth speak;" when the orthodox would have clamoured him down for the heretical assertion that he saw the blood of Christ in the heart. From that time Stoddard clung to the leader, and was faithful unto death. These and others were "converted," as their saying was, and in several places they gathered together in meetings for worship and waiting upon God; at first, without any distinctive name, without any conscious purpose of starting a new reformation. Only by degrees was it made clear to Fox himself that he was sent for the revival of all Christendom. In the first years there is no record of any preacher besides Fox, and he alone suffered for the truth. But when he entered Nottingham to challenge Biblical Christianity in the great church of St. Mary's, there were disciples who were accompanying him in his journey: and when he

was imprisoned for the second time at Derby, he twice sent forth epistles to the "convinced and tender people," among whom he had been labouring. "Friends and other tender people," the phrase indicates that at this time many were hovering round him in an undecided state of mind. Some success he had in the midland counties, but we have no means of estimating its amount. Upon his release from prison, he went into Yorkshire, and it was in this and the neighbouring counties that he laid broad and deep the foundations of the new Church. In three or four years the whole countryside was stirred, and the fame of the children of the light spread far and wide. Preachers arose among them, who followed in Fox's footsteps; entering the churches and public places as he did, proclaiming everywhere the new gospel which was the old, the primitive gospel of the first century. Richard Farnsworth, James Nayler, and William Dewsbury, were convinced and received the truth in 1651. The next year saw the little band increased by the accession of Burroughs and Howgill, Camm and Audland, Richard Hubberthorn and Miles Halhead, and several mighty men of valour besides. By 1654, the preachers had become so great a company, that more than sixty were sent forth from the north country to the eastern, southern, and western parts of the nation. So large a band of preachers roused a great host of believers; although the proportion of preachers to the whole number was larger among the Quakers than is usual among other Christian Churches. No census was taken during Fox's life-time, but there are facts on record which prove that the body rapidly grew during its first generation. In 1656, George Fox writes: "In this year the Lord's truth

was finely planted over the nation, and many thousands were turned to the Lord: insomuch that there were seldom fewer than one thousand in prison in this nation, for truth's testimony, some for tithes, some for going to the steeple-houses, some for not swearing, and others for not pulling off their hats, &c."¹ Soon after the Restoration a careful enumeration of Quakers in prison throughout all England was made, and it was found that the number exceeded four thousand and two hundred. If we grant that in the proportion of their martyrs to the whole number, this stubborn folk eclipse every other part of the Christian Church in every age, still four thousand in prison must represent many times that number outside. Robert Barclay the younger, in his interesting work already referred to, states that the Friends in London in 1675, estimated their number in the metropolis as amounting to ten thousand; and he computes the whole number in England and Wales, in the year 1700, as at least sixty thousand. This compared with the total population of that day was a much larger fraction than it would be now. There were also at that time flourishing Quaker churches in Ireland and Scotland, on the Continent, and in the plantations in America. Quakerism established itself during Fox's lifetime in a manner, and to an extent, which might well seem to promise the final universal triumph which the Quaker prophets so confidently foretold. If one compares Fox's success with that of Luther, the great German reformer saw his doctrines more widely spread, and where they came, more generally accepted: but Luther's reformation was almost from the first taken under the patronage of

¹ *Journal*, I. 356.

earthly princes, and defended by carnal weapons. For a comparison with a religion propagated by purely spiritual means, Fox would have had to go back to primitive Christianity itself, of which, indeed, he ever asserted and believed that his teaching was the true revival. In the first century of our religion no enumeration of the believers was taken, and whether there were more Christians at the close of the first generation of Christianity than Quakers at the close of the first generation of quakerism, it is impossible to say. At least it is certain that so far as numbers go, George Fox met with splendid success.

Believers were gathered in from all ranks and classes, unless perhaps the highest. The majority were tradesmen, artizans, yeomen, farmers; but men of wealth, position and university education were not rare among them. A baronet's daughter, Miss Trelawney of Plymouth, and Lady Margaret Hambleton, became enrolled converts. Princess Elizabeth, daughter of the luckless Frederick King of Bohemia, and sister of Sophia, Duchess of Hanover, the mother of our King George I., was, if not quite a Quaker, at least a sincere proselyte of the gate; but two or three ladies do not suffice to give a tinge of aristocracy to the Quakers. If the nobility refused to join a people who refused them their accustomed deference, and whose sturdy independence of spirit and conduct must have seemed to threaten the existence of privileged orders; the landed gentry and their friends were not so conservative. Some of these, Judge Fell, Justice Hotham, and Esquire Marsh, received Fox and his teaching with much sympathy, and defended him to the utmost of their power, without

formally adopting his opinions. Others, landed proprietors, justices of the peace, clergymen, officers in the army, took all risks, and openly accepted the opprobrious name of Quakers.

Readers of Fox's journal and other records of the rise of quakerism cannot fail to be struck with the number of soldiers who joined him. Captain Stoddard, Captain Ward, Colonel Osborn, Colonel Ashfield, Major Ripan, Captain Brown, Colonel Lilburn, Captain Pool, Colonel David Barclay, with many officers and men, enlisted in the quaker ranks; and others are named who received quaker meetings in their houses, who may have been Quakers themselves, though it is not so stated. If one were asked to guess the previous profession of any one of the quaker preachers, setting the women-preachers aside, the likeliest conjecture would be that he had been in the army, probably in the army of the Parliament, but some who had fought for the King were among them. Nor did these stalwart warriors discern all at once the incompatibility of their military character with the Quaker profession. Captain Devonport remained in the army, until he was turned out for not putting off his hat, and for saying thou and thee to his superiors. Burroughs made it a complaint to Cromwell, that soldiers, as well as justices of the peace, and other officials, had been discharged on account of quakerism. Many Quaker soldiers left Cromwell's army when he required of them an oath of fidelity. At that time they could fight, though they could not swear. There were Quakers in the navy too. In one ship there was a little band of them, who after enduring much persecution, were recognised as the bravest men on

board, and specially selected for the most dangerous service, in which they did not fail to uphold their repute. Some of these were presently further enlightened, and then neither abuse nor blows, nor threat of hanging at the yard-arm could move them to lift a finger against the life of a fellow-man. Dismissed from the navy, Thomas Lurting entered the merchant-service. His ship was captured by the Turks in the Mediterranean, and steered for Algiers. Unarmed, and without striking a blow, he and the other seamen under his leadership, retook the vessel, and made their captors captives. True to his principles, Lurting stoutly refused to make money by the sale of his prisoners, and gave another proof of his coolness and courage by landing them on their own shore. The exploit was reported to King Charles, who visited the ship at Gravesend. These facts entirely dissipate the suspicion that the peace-principles of the Quakers had their origin in, or were supported by, some deficiency in courage. On the contrary, the followers of George Fox were the stoutest-hearted men of their age; men who had followed Rupert's fiery charge, or with Cromwell turned the tide of fight on Marston Moor; and after proving their quality on many a hard fought field, displayed a nobler courage in daring, at the voice of conscience, to lay down their swords, and offer their clank to the smithy. Colonel Barclay, a man with the blood of the Gordons in his veins, (those Gordons of whom George Gordon of Khartoum spent his life warring on the Continent under the great Cossutius, and returned a white-haired veteran,) embraced the Quaker faith, and manfully bore the insolence of the rabble of Edinburgh, as

Whittier has sung. Whatever we may think of the early Quakers, at least they were not cowards.

There were educated men among these children of the light. Thomas Lawson, "a high sort of priest," and Thomas Taylor, "an ancient priest," abandoned their benefices to follow George Fox; as did others of their cloth. Giles Barnardiston was a gentleman of property, educated at the university for the Church, to which after six years of study he could not incline; he entered the army, attained the rank of colonel, and ended by joining the Quakers. Samuel Fisher, according to Croese, the anti-quaker historian of quakerism, was a man singularly learned and wonderfully eloquent; an accurate Greek and Latin scholar, and sufficiently versed in Hebrew to write a book for the Jews in that language. Enjoying a living worth £500 a year, he resigned it to become a Baptist preacher, on what amount of stipend history saith not, but little or much, he gave that up also, to preach the gospel freely among the Friends of truth. William Ames, the Quaker apostle of Holland, was previously a Baptist preacher and a military officer who kept his men well in hand by strict discipline. So highly was he esteemed for eloquence and learning, that he was styled the "perfect doctor." It must be admitted, however, that the earliest quaker writings, considered as literature, are poor and tedious. Not until near upon the beginning of the second generation of quakerism, were its doctrines set forth in a perspicuous manner by Penn and Barclay. Much of the preceding controversial literature is wearisomely tautological, and defaced by bad grammar, as well as bad taste. The men who came to

the front at first were mostly like George Fox himself, men of the people, who had only such modicum of education as the country-side afforded, and who imitated their leader's depreciation of human learning, and dead languages. Their power lay in the fervour of their faith, the consistency of their lives, and in a rude natural eloquence at times rising into rapture, at times melting in tenderness, and at times thundering in denunciation. Our limits do not permit a particular reference to them all, but let us glance at two or three of these first missionaries of the quaker gospel.

"Whilst I was in the dungeon at Carlisle," George Fox writes in his Journal, the year was 1653, "one, James Parnel, a little lad of about sixteen years of age, came to see me, and was convinced; and the Lord quickly made him a powerful minister of the Word of Life, and many were turned to Christ by him; though he lived not long, for travelling into Essex in the work of the ministry, in the year 1655 he was committed to Colchester Castle, where he endured very great hardships and sufferings, being put by the cruel jailer into a hole in the Castle wall, called the oven, so high from the ground, that he went up to it by a ladder, which being six feet too short, he was fain to climb from the ladder to the hole by a rope that was fastened above. And when friends would have given him a cord and a basket to have drawn up his victuals in, the inhuman jailer would not suffer them, but forced him to go down and up by that short ladder and rope to fetch his victuals, which for a long time he did, or else he might have been famished in the hole. At length, his limbs being much

benumbed with lying in that place, yet being constrained to go down to take up some victuals, as he came up the ladder again with his victuals in one hand, and caught at the rope with the other, he missed the rope and fell down from a very great height upon the stones, by which fall he was exceedingly wounded on his head and arms, and his body was much bruised, and he died in a short time after." So perished the first Quaker who gave his life for his faith. The poor little lad, small in size, and insignificant in personal appearance, was contemptuously dubbed "the quaking boy." Yet this quaking boy shook the eastern counties, almost as Fox had shaken the north. Son of a labouring man of Retford, he had received some education, perhaps at the Grammar School of that place. According to his own account a great sinner, he was converted at the age of fourteen, and joined a "people whom the Lord was gathering out of the dark world, to sit down together and wait upon his name." Hearing of the Quakers, he felt one in spirit with them before he saw their faces. He visited Fox in the Carlisle dungeon, embraced his doctrine and preached it in Cambridge. Contemptible as his appearance was, he created a great sensation. Town and gown raged around him, and a Baptist preacher challenged him to a public discussion. The Baptist opened fire with the point-blank question: "The writings of the Prophets and Apostles, which are called Scripture, whether are they the words and sayings of the most High God: yea or nay?" To this his boy-adversary replied: "The Word of God, which is God, which dwelt in the Prophets and Apostles, from it they spoke forth the things which are recorded in the

Scripture.”¹ The Baptist cried out, “No answer,” and appealed to the young priests and scholars; but spite of the clamour around him, Parnel refused to add to or alter his reply. One wonders at this, for Fox would promptly have returned a direct affirmative. “Then the priest took out his Bible,” Fox tells us, narrating one of his many encounters, “and said it was the Word of God. I told him it was the words of God, but not God the Word. I owned what the Scriptures said of themselves, namely, that they were the words of God, but Christ was the Word.” But Parnel appears to have pushed quaker views to their extreme. Fox would not acknowledge the existing churches to be true churches: Parnel bluntly speaks of them as the heathen. Fox refused to cringe to the rich and great. Parnel inveighed against the luxurious and self-indulgent life of the aristocracy with the asperity of a modern socialist. Notwithstanding, perhaps because of, the roughness of his language, he caused great excitement in the eastern counties. There was also a tender and loving side to his character, and a patient endurance of suffering, which drew many hearts to him. Coming out of St. Nicholas Church at Colchester, a man struck him with a great staff, saying: “There, take that for Jesus Christ’s sake.” “Friend, I do take it for Jesus Christ’s sake,” was the meek reply.” Thousands crowded to hear the boy preacher, and numbers received his doctrine. Within two or three years he founded many good meetings in Essex, and published several writings in defence of the truth, which after his death were collected and repub-

¹ *Parnel's Collected Writings*, 1675, p. 205, *et seq.*

² Callaway's *Memoir of Parnel*, p. 76.

lished by his admirers. They contain invectives against the clergy and the established religion which, coming from a mere boy, must have been exasperating where they were not convincing. Yet the youth had true piety and force of character, or he could not have made such a deep impression, and won so many converts.

Farnsworth, Nayler, and Dewsbury were converts before Parnel, and leading preachers much longer. Nayler, who achieved a lamentable notoriety, will appear in the next chapter. The other two present no distinctive features to single them out for special mention from so great a number of zealous and self-sacrificing ministers. Indeed, the homogeneity of these early quaker preachers in their belief and its expression, in their conduct and their sufferings, in their excellencies and their defects, is remarkable. They seem all to have been cast into one mould; or, as they themselves believed, inspired by the same Spirit. Perfectly independent of each other, never dreaming of owing allegiance to any earthly leader, not even to Fox himself, they moved on parallel lines, in a harmony of purpose and of practice seldom to be found in religious communions ruled by creeds and rubrics. The slight apparent discrepancy between the quaking boy and George Fox which has just been mentioned is noticeable for its rarity. Schism and discipline were not thought of at first; they all fought as comrades in the great war, each one independently in his own corner of the field like the Homeric heroes around Troy, but all in similar arms and in the same spirit against the same foe. If any must be singled out, let it be the two who in the great dispersion of 1654 turned their steps towards the

metropolis. Then, as now, probably more than now, London by its populousness and wealth, its political and religious weight, overshadowed the whole country: and the men whom the Spirit designated to labour in this great centre of the national life—Francis Howgill and Edward Burroughs—must have seemed to their brethren at least not inferior to the rest. Their conversion has already been related: a few words here about their career.

Howgill, a Westmoreland man, possessed landed property, received a University education, left the Established Church and became an Independent minister. Before he became a Quaker he was much esteemed and beloved in his own neighbourhood. After hearing Fox preach, he exclaimed: "This man speaks with authority, and not as the scribes;" and immediately embraced and confessed the truth. He was about thirty-five years old when he started with Burroughs for London. Here he laboured during most of the next ten years, "an eminent and eloquent man." Soon after coming to London, he obtained an interview with the Protector, and in the name of the Lord demanded the stoppage of persecution. Cromwell, questioning his divine commission, took no immediate action, in consequence of which Howgill put his prophecy in writing, and it remains legible by us, one out of many specimens still extant of quaker prophecy, the character of which must be carefully considered when we arrive at that part of our subject. Here we may transcribe part of Howgill's letter, as an illustration of his fearless spirit and entire confidence in his own mission. He addresses the Lord High Protector bluntly, as: "Friend—I was moved by the Lord to come to thee

... Therefore hear the word of the Lord . . . Thus saith the Lord, I chose thee out of all the nations when thou wast little in thine own eyes, and threw down the mountains and the powers of the earth before thee, which had established wickedness by a law, and I cut them down, and broke the yokes and bonds of the oppressor, and made them stoop before thee, that thou passedst over them, and trod upon their necks: but, thus saith the Lord, now thy heart is not upright before me, but thou takest counsel, but not of me . . . What! saith the Lord, Have I thrown down all the oppressors, and broken their laws, and thou art now going about to establish them again, and art going to build again that which I have destroyed? Wherefore thus saith the Lord, Wilt thou limit Me, and set bounds to Me, when and where and how, and by whom I shall declare and publish My name? Then will I break thy cord, and remove thy stake, and exalt Myself in thy overthrow. Therefore this is the word of the Lord to thee, whether thou wilt hear, or forbear. If thou take not away all those laws which are made concerning religion, whereby the people which are dear in mine eyes are oppressed, thou shalt not be established; but as thou hast trodden down mine enemies by my power, so shalt thou be trodden down by my power, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for my gospel shall not be established by thy sword, nor by thy law; but by my might and by my Spirit. Unto thee, this is the word of the Lord, stint not the eternal Spirit, by which I will publish my name when, and where, and how I will; for if thou dost, thou shalt be as dust before the wind. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, and he will perform his promise."¹

¹ *William Sewel's History*, Friends' Library Edition, Pt. I., p. 226.

Poor old Oliver. Between the bigoted horror of the Presbyterians at the bare mention of the word, toleration; and the stern resolve of his preaching colonels and captains, not to yield one iota of the religious liberty they had won with their swords, he must often have felt his position well nigh untenable, and wished himself back again at Huntingdon, amid his beeves and his brewings. And now these fanatic Quakers come crying, "Persecution, persecution," in his ears, as if it were all his doing! Too well he knows that, scowl as they may against each other, both Presbyterians and Independents are merciless in their determination not to suffer this new heresy to have free course. And what do the fellows want? Not simply to be let alone, but to have liberty to preach in the churches and courts of justice, and even in Parliament itself. The demand was preposterous: to yield would be to permit all civil order to be perpetually disturbed by every crack-brained enthusiast who fancied himself inspired. And yet—and yet—inside that rugged exterior Oliver had a tender heart, and he was sincerely desirous of religious peace, general toleration, and a good measure of liberty for all. He pitied these poor Quakers, for he knew the severity and the frequent injustice of their sufferings; nor was he quite sure that there was not a measure of the Divine Spirit speaking through them also. Nay: he was sure that there was: and yet it was little he could, or dared to do on their behalf. Decidedly, one pities Oliver. The Quakers too had a sort of pity for him: but they fully believed their prophecies, and believed that they witnessed the fulfilment of them within the next few years.

Whether or no the house of Cromwell was overthrown by divine displeasure on account of the ill treatment of the Quakers, the glorious Restoration brought upon them scorpions for whips: and the little finger of the merry monarch was thicker than stern Cromwell's loins. Not that Charles himself was of a persecuting temper, or that he had any special dislike to the Quakers. On the contrary, he many times, while yet new to his seat, interfered to do special kindnesses to George Fox, and other individual members of the society. But Venner, the Fifth Monarchy preacher, at the head of forty or fifty of the old warriors of the Commonwealth, burst into London streets, kept all the city in alarm for days, broke by his fierce charge the Household guards, and shook Charles's newly-acquired throne. Then a universal panic swept away all thoughts of moderation. It was after this insurrection that the four thousand and two hundred Quakers were thrown into prison, five hundred of them in London. Howgill's spirit was sorely exercised. Was this the deliverance which was to follow the Divine judgment on the unfaithful Cromwells? For weeks and months he pondered and prayed, and patiently waited on the Lord, to know His mind concerning the time to come. At last on the 28th of the third month of 1662 the answer came, and this also remains on record, a remarkable instance among the quaker revelations. "And whilst I was waiting out of all visible things, and quite out of the world in my spirit, and my heart up in nothing but the living God, the Lord opened the springs of the great deep, and overflowed my whole heart with light and love: and my eyes were as a fountain, because of tears of joy, because of His heritage, of whom He shewed me, and said unto

me in a full, fresh, living power, and a holy full testimony, so that my heart was ravished therewith in joy unspeakable, and I was out of the body with God in His heavenly paradise, where I saw and felt things unutterable, and beyond all demonstration and speech. At last the life closed with my understanding, and my spirit listened unto Him, and the everlasting God said, 'Shall I hide anything from those that seek my face in righteousness? Nay. I will manifest it to them that fear me: I will speak; do thou listen, and publish it among all my people, that they may be comforted and thou satisfied.'¹ The divine message ushered in by this ecstatic prelude is a declaration that sun, moon, and stars shall cease to shine, and come to an end sooner than "the covenant I have made with this people, into which they are entered with me, shall end or be broken. Yea, though the powers of darkness and hell combine against them, and the jaws of death open its mouth, yet I will deliver them and lead them through all. I will take their enemies, I will hurl them hither and thither, as stones are hurled in a sling; and the memorial of this nation which is holy unto me shall never be rooted out, but shall live through all ages, as a cloud of witnesses in generations to come" The publication of this revelation encouraged the believers in the darkest hour of their long series of persecutions, and doubtless its memory often comforted Howgill himself in his trials and hopeless confinement. For his turn was to come the very next year. Arrested in his native county, the oath of allegiance was tendered to him and of course refused. At such a time all explanations and remon-

¹ *Scripture Harmony*, Part III., page 31.

stances were useless. After a season of the law's delay, he and the judge pronounce the fatal sentence, "You are put out of the king's protection and the benefit of the law: your lands are confis-cate to the king during your life: and your goods and chattels for ever; and you to be a prisoner during your life."¹ The gates of Appleby gaol closed behind him: four years he passed in imprisonment, bearing himself cheerfully, and labouring to serve the truth by his pen, then he died in much content.

His comrade in the holy war, "the son of thunder and consolation," and "true prophet of God," Edward Burrough, or Burroughs, was son of a churchman of some wealth, living in or near Kendal, and had as good an education as his native place could afford, but was not a classical scholar. Coming under Fox's influence when about eighteen years old, he had to take up his cross at the outset, for his father turned him out of doors. Expelled from home, the lad accompanied Fox in his journeys, and took a man's part in work and suffering. His vivid remembrance of those early days in the north country, from 1652 to 1654, is worth quoting:—"And in the beginning we were but few in number . . . and all the priests and rulers were in an uproar . . . there were uproars in steeple-houses, and uproars in markets, and often haling before magistrates, . . . the priests preaching in their pulpits, and praying against us, and setting days apart to seek their God against us, crying without ceasing in publick and in private, *Heresie, Heresie, Error and Blasphemy*, and that we were *Deceivers, Witches*, and *Seducers*, and such like . . . and scarce one steeple-

¹ *Scott's History*, Part III., page 191.

house or market in all those counties but may witness what Beatings, Bruisings, Shakings, Halings we have suffered. . . . But notwithstanding all that was acted and spoken against us, many hundreds of the honest and sober people owned us, and also many rude and ungodly people were converted to the truth."¹ One sees them even now through the long vista of two centuries and more, those clergymen and dissenting preachers, struck with consternation at the uprising of this strange fanaticism, fasting and praying against its progress, heartily sincere in their pious horror, though not quite Christ-like in their too evident sympathy with the fury of the mob: Fox, Nayler, Burroughs and the rest on their part burning with unquenchable zeal, worrying the priests with accusations of preaching for hire, and proclaiming with unbounded confidence the advent of the true gospel. So the conflict raged, until the few became many, and the sixty preachers dispersed on their several ways. When Howgill and Burroughs arrived in the great city, they found a little handful of friends already gathered; but the bulk of the work was theirs. Burroughs soon showed his quality. It was summer time, and the citizens in the evening strolled in the fields. Wrestling was a popular amusement, and Burroughs saw a crowd around a strong and dexterous fellow who threw his antagonists one after another. Three had fallen, and the conqueror looked round the ring for a fourth opponent, but no one dared to step forward. Then Burroughs stepped into the midst, and the wrestler gazed with astonishment at this puny adversary, for Burroughs, like

¹ *Works of Edward Burroughs*, 1672. Preface to *The Great Mystery*.

Parnel, was small of stature. The crowd eagerly expected some amusement, but when Burroughs opened his mouth, the victory was his: for the lad was a Boanerges, and when he spoke of the light of Christ and the witness within, it was with heart-piercing power. "He was one of those valiants whose bow never turned back, nor sword empty from the slaughter of the mighty: for the Lord blessed his powerful ministry with a very glorious success: nay, he was such an excellent instrument in the hand of God that even some mighty and eminent men were touched to the heart by the power of the word of life, which he preached." His zeal was indefatigable. Howgill bears witness of him that during the ten years from his conversion to his death, Burroughs never once withdrew for so much as one week from his work, either for rest or on private business. A bulky folio preserves his numerous publications. In the city of London many hundreds were converted by his ministry. He firmly believed himself to be an inspired prophet, and so he was regarded by the Quaker Church. What he spoke and wrote was by order and authority given unto him by the Spirit of the Living God, and for his words he boldly claimed infallibility.¹ Face to face and in writing, he prophesied against the Protector and foretold his death. Like the other Quaker preachers he wears two aspects. In his personal character, in his loving exhortations to his fellow-believers, he wins upon us by a powerfully attractive Christian character: but watch him in controversy, and his arrogance of manner, his bitterness of denunciation, his intolerant spirit, produce a feeling of revulsion. His mind admitted of no

¹ See his letter to an Assembly of Anabaptists at Newcastle, 1654.

gradations: the light was all light, the darkness all black as hell. With difficulty he brought himself occasionally to recognise a measure of sincerity and tenderness of conscience in some of those who did not at once accept the quaker doctrines, and to admit that they had a sort of maimed and blinded religion which yet was not absolutely death itself. But for the clergy, for the hireling preachers, he has no word of charity. Returning to London from a visit to Bristol to share the sufferings of the persecuted, with a foresight of his death, he was cast with six or seven score others into Newgate prison. The place was a veritable Black hole. Many of the prisoners sickened and died of suffocation. Strong interest was made to procure Burroughs' release, and a royal order was obtained, but the enmity of the city authorities delayed its execution. After eight months' imprisonment he died at the age of eight and twenty.

Unremitting toil, frequent ill usage, and confinement in noisome prisons shortened the lives of these dauntless missionaries. Cannon and Audland who went to Bristol were received with serious tumults, which they encountered with the customary indifference to suffering. In a few years they gathered a great band of believers round them, but both wore out their strength by preaching, and died of consumption. Hubbertson, another old soldier, who went to Newbie, died in Newgate a short time before Burroughs. Farnworth died in 1667; Naylor in 1669 at about the age of 44. William Dowsing, besides other imprisonments, endured 19 years' confinement at Warwick, in spite of which he lived till 1688. George Whitehead alone of the earliest group of ministers, long survived Fox and

lived to present an address to George I. Many names besides these have an equal claim to mention in the noble list of quaker preachers of the seventeenth century. William Penn is too well-known to need eulogium. Robert Barclay's fame rests upon his writings which must be noticed in another chapter.

The women preachers must not be passed without notice. Being called and inspired by the same Spirit, theoretically they were on a perfect equality with the men: practically they occupied a decidedly subordinate position, although one in itself both conspicuous and important. They were fewer in number, if we may judge from the names mentioned in the histories. Many women devoted themselves to religious services, such as visiting the sick and the prisoners, watching over the women in their congregations, distributing religious books, and conversing with those whom they met: such, although it may be difficult to draw the line, should hardly be classed as preachers. Others appear to have had one special message committed to them, the delivery of which, so far as the records show, constituted their whole public ministry. For instance, during the horribly cruel persecution of the Quakers in Puritan America, Mary Clark, wife of a merchant-tailor of London, left her husband and children, and sailed to Boston to warn the persecutors to desist from their iniquity. "After she had delivered her message, she was unmercifully rewarded with twenty stripes of a whip with three cords, on her naked back, and detained prisoner about twelve weeks in the winter season." This completes the history of Mary Clark's public ministry; although she may have been a constant

preacher in London for aught we know. Anne Downer preached there, before the arrival of Howgill and Burroughs: and other women followed her example. Margaret Fell, afterwards Margaret Fox, was a zealous preacher. Among the twelve who accompanied George Fox in his missionary journey to America, were two women, one of whom we know was a preacher. Of the clearly recognised women-preachers we may select Anne Cann for mention. She was a well-educated woman, married first to John Audland, the Bristol preacher. Husband and wife were convinced in Westmoreland in 1652, and both began to preach in the next year. In 1653, Anne Audland was committed to prison at Auckland, where she preached from her prison window. At Banbury in Oxfordshire she was indicted for blasphemy, but an attempt to get her burned did not succeed. Escaping with life, she was imprisoned in an abominable hole. "The prison whither she was sent was a nasty place, several steps underground; on the side whereof was a common sewer, which sometimes stank very much, and frogs and toads crawled into the room. Here she was kept about eight months, but shewed herself content, being persuaded that it was for the Lord's sake she thus suffered."¹ Two years after the death of her husband, she married Thomas Cann, also a minister. She died in 1705 at a great age, leaving a good reputation. It is recorded of her, "that she came to be well acquainted with adversities, but by all these she was the more spurred on to advance in true piety, and was a very remarkable teacher in the church, having an extraordinary gift to declare the truth. And yet she

¹ *Scovel's History*, Part IV., page 389.

was very modest and humble, insomuch that how full soever she was of matter, she rarely appeared to preach in large meetings, when she knew there were men qualified for that service; and she was grieved when she perceived any of her sex to be too forward on such occasions, and therefore she advised them to be cautious, though she did not omit to encourage the good in all, and endeavoured not to quench the Spirit in any."¹ In some other women, zeal was more conspicuous than discretion. Elizabeth Heavens and Elizabeth Fletcher spoke in the streets of Oxford, and entered the colleges to address the students. The under-graduates tied the poor women together, put them under the pump, and then dragged them through a ditch. This did not deter them from speaking in one of the churches a few days after, and bringing upon themselves imprisonment and a sound whipping.² At Bristol Elizabeth Marshall accosted the priest in church after he had dismissed the congregation with the benediction, saying: "This is the word of the Lord to thee. I warn thee to repent and to mind the light of Christ in thy conscience."³ Barbara Blangton of Bristol, originally a schoolmistress or governess, evidently well-connected, as she was a frequent visitor at the Earl of Bath's, after her conversion visited many towns in the west of England, to bear her testimony in the steeple-houses, getting imprisoned repeatedly. She crossed over to Ireland and distinguished herself by her courage and perseverance in the work, despite many hardships. Mary Fisher travelled alone to Adrianople where she delivered her message to Saitan Mohammed in the midst of

¹ *Ibid.*² *Ibid.*, Part I., p. 249.³ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

his camp. On the whole one concludes that the women of early quakerism, in spite of some shocking instances of fanaticism, contributed not a little to the progress of the truth.

Naturally Fox's journal and the other records are almost entirely taken up by the spiritual experiences, the evangelistic labours, and the persecutions, of the children of the Light. But if the impression is produced that the Quakers were mostly preachers, and that quakerism consisted chiefly in hearing sermons, it would greatly mislead us. Neither preaching sermons nor hearing them was essential to their religion. True, one precept was perpetually repeated: Keep your meetings: Keep your meetings. At the appointed hour, in the appointed place, the Friends of truth must assemble to wait upon God. Whether word should be spoken, or prayer uttered, depended not upon their will, but upon the Divine Spirit. There were meetings in which time after time, it might be for months together, the little band of believers met and sat in an awful stillness, rose and separated without having heard an audible voice. Doubtless the preachers were many, but preaching was not the chief thing. The chief thing was conduct. That busy noise of controversial propagandism to which we listen across the centuries, must not make us forget the quiet daily life of the Quakers, which was its most effective argument. Much of this from its nature could not be recorded in history, but here and there we catch glimpses of the extraordinary fidelity to principle which characterised this people. It was their habit to bring every part of their behaviour to the test of the Light, and to reject

and which could not bear the pure celestial ray. In their commercial dealings they upheld a standard of probity which at first incurred suspicion from its very strangeness. William Edmundson found that the Friends' strict rule of verity, which would at once ask or offer the price intended to be given or taken, was a hindrance to doing business. "In those days the keeping to one price in selling goods was a great stumbling-block to most sorts of people, and made them stand at a distance from buying for some time, until they saw farther into the justice of the manner thereof."¹ These Quaker shop-keepers carried the Light into their shops, and actually made the goods they dealt in matters of conscience. Gilbert Latex, a fashionable West-end tailor, who had been "in great business in the world," and who had a large connection among persons of rank and quality, whose apparel he had been accustomed to set off "with much superfluity of lace and ribbons," after he became a Quaker, found out that his conscience would not suffer him to aid and abet this extravagance, nor to permit his servants to do so. He made his conscience the measure by which to cut his customers' coats. Naturally the customers objected, his business decayed, he was compelled to dismiss his workmen, and the prospect of having to become a journeyman himself, stared him in the face. Honest Gilbert escaped this hard fate somehow; probably as the Quakers increased in number, they found their way to his shop. Atkinson and Armstrong, doing business on the Scottish border, not only declined to smuggle, as was common around

¹ *William Edmundson's Journal*. Friends' Library, Vol. IV., p. 17.

them, but refused to sell "such striped and gaudy cloth as was not seemly for friends to wear."¹ Christopher Story tells us that "honest friends of what employment soever were then concerned to be testimony-bearers in the way of their trade or business, and though it looked for a time as if it would hurt their trades, yet as friends were faithful, and persevered in a meek and quiet spirit, they prospered; and though some had but little when they were convinced, their endeavours were blessed; for being diligent in the management of their trades and affairs, and carefully keeping their words and promises they gained credit in the country."² The time came when people would inquire for a quaker tradesman or artizan. Then the Quakers grew rich, and wealth sapped the fortress which persecution and poverty had assaulted in vain. But that was in the after time. In this first age honesty and industry, frugality and brotherly kindness reigned among them. A grave simplicity ruled in their family life. Thomas Edwood tells us how, when he was still a gay youth, his father and he went to Chalfont to visit Isaac Penington, Esq., son of the wealthy alderman, who had married Lady Springett; and how surprised and disgusted they were to find their old friends turned Quakers, a people whose name they had scarcely heard before. "So great a change from a free debonair and courtly sort of behaviour, which we formerly had found them in, to so strict a gravity as they now received us with, did not a little amuse us, and disappoint our expectation of such a pleasant visit as we

¹ *Friends' Library*, Vol. IX., p. 156.

² *Ibid.*, p. 157.

used to have, and had now promised ourselves.”¹ The Quakers shared to the full the Puritan dislike of music and sports, and their young folk were trained severely. John Banks, a worthy preacher, writes to his children, Sarah, John, and Ann, that they should “be quiet and sober, not wanton, nor given to play by no means, nor laughing; but mind your books, and that which is good, and go to meetings, and love one another.” The sentiments of John Banks were general among the Quakers. In their attire the early Friends were neither so uniform nor so scrupulous as their descendants became. George Fox may be seen buying a scarlet gown for his wife; and that excellent lady, minister though she was, wore her ribbons and laces, and if not particular about the style of her gown, yet her daughter was for her, for we may read Miss Sarah’s note to the dressmaker, desiring that it may be made “very civil and as usually worn.” The Misses Fell seem to have been handsome and lively young women, who could wear sky blue stockings, red petticoats, and blue aprons. In times of bereavement the Friends would not give in to the custom of wearing black. Whatever their garb, human hearts beat warmly in their breasts despite the rigid self-restraint to which they trained themselves. Young Ellwood long sighed for the beautiful Miss Gulielma Springett, Isaac Penington’s step-daughter, and resigned her reluctantly to the superior merits of William Penn. William Caton travelling as a preacher in Holland and Germany, fell in love with Anneken Dirrix, and his love was returned; but for several months they hesitated to contract an engagement. At length

¹ *Ellwood's History* written by himself. 1885, edn., page 21.

William had a revelation. "Waiting awhile exceedingly steadfastly in the light, the Lord, the life began to arise, and the word of the Lord testified unto me thus, saying: 'She is the gift of the Lord unto thee.'"¹ Then he received her as the Lord's gift. This is an instructive instance of the Quaker's faith in divine guidance. The quaint flavour of the following quaker love-letter two hundred and more years old, shows that the strongest religious convictions do not chill the affections. "And now my dearest, to whom my heart is perfectly knit I am in that which first begat our union do I most heartily embrace thee in the arms of pure affection, and send it unto thee with the lips of truth."² In the midst of intense persecution, heart would clasp to heart, and they loved each other none the less, because they loved the truth of Christ before all things.

¹ *Autobiography of William Penn*, by Thomas Ashby, 1844.

² *Original Letters of the Friends of Scotland, 1711-1713*, by Maria Waring, 1861, pp. 21-22 (8).

CHAPTER VII.

FANATICISM.

A PAINFUL duty is now before us. Were it lawful to portray only the bright and beautiful in quaker story, drawing the kindly veil of oblivion over repulsive incidents, that course would be pleasanter both for writer and reader. But partiality would render this book valueless. The reader is invited to share in a study of quakerism, undertaken, not for pleasure nor the mere gratification of curiosity, but in the secret hope that in this direction may be found some useful guidance for to-day. With this object in view it is imperative that we should know the Quakers as they actually were, and see whither they were led by unlimited confidence in their own subjective convictions. Moreover partiality towards them would be injustice to others. Not the ignorant mob only, but saintly men like Baxter and Rutherford and Owen, regarded the Quakers with an aversion amounting to horror. If the Quakers had been altogether and only children of the Light, shining with the celestial beauty of a Christ-like spirit, this general detestation of their very name would be as inexplicable as inexcusable. Unhappily some of them did not preserve their mental balance, but were carried away by an over-confidence in their persuasion of Divine inspiration into

shameful acts, which go far to explain the popular dislike.

That George Fox was by some accounted mad, is, remembering against Whom the like accusation was brought, no blemish upon his high reputation. It is needful, however, to see whether any thing can be brought against him which would give some colour to the accusation. His temporary touch of Böhmenism has been referred to already. Visionary though he was, Jacob Böhme was not insane, and if Fox did for one moment turn his eyes in the direction of similar speculations, he resolutely turned them away again, and devoted himself to the spiritual, moral and practical side of the Christian religion. His claim to inspiration set apart for separate examination. George Fox, in his character and career, presents the spectacle of an eminently simple, sober-minded, whole-hearted, healthily-sane Christian, of a type only too rare in this world of ours. Yet there is one strange exceptional incident, which must be narrated, and in his own words, because an element in it links it on to the stranger, sadder freaks of some of his followers. It happened in 1651, soon after his release from Derby prison.

"And as I was walking along with several friends, I afterwards found, and I saw three steep-house spires, and they struck at my life; and I asked friends what place that was, and they said Lichfield. Immediately the word of the Lord came to me, that I must go thither. So being come to the house we were going to I wished ~~them~~ ^{those} that were with me to walk into the house, saying nothing to them whether I was to go. And as soon as they were gone, I stepped away, and went by my eye

over hedge and ditch, till I came within a mile of Lichfield, where in a great field, there were shepherds keeping their sheep. Then I was commanded by the Lord to pull off my shoes : and I stood still, (for it was winter) ; and the word of the Lord was like a fire in me. So I put off my shoes, and left them with the shepherds, and the poor shepherds trembled, and were astonished. Then I walked on about a mile till I came into the city, and as soon as I got within the city, the word of the Lord came to me again, saying : ‘ Cry, Woe unto the bloody city of Lichfield.’ So I went up and down the streets, crying with a loud voice, ‘ Woe to the bloody city of Lichfield.’ And it being market-day, I went into the market-place, and to and fro in the several parts of it, and made stands, crying as before, ‘ Woe to the bloody city of Lichfield.’ And no one laid hands on me. But as I went thus, crying through the streets, there seemed to me to be a channel of blood running down the streets, and the market-place appeared like a pool of blood. Now when I had declared what was upon me, and felt myself clear, I went out of the town in peace, and returning to the shepherds, gave them some money, and took my shoes of them again. But the fire of the Lord was so in my feet, and all over me, that I did not matter to put on my shoes any more, and was at a stand whether I should or no, till I felt freedom from the Lord so to do : and then after I had washed my feet I put on my shoes again. After this a deep consideration came upon me, why, or for what reason, I should be sent to cry against that city, and call it, the bloody city. For though the parliament had the minster one while, and the king another while, and much blood had been

shed in the town during the wars between them, yet that was no more than had befallen many other places. But afterwards I came to understand that in the Emperor Diocletian's time, a thousand Christians were martyred in Lichfield. So I was to go, without my shoes, through the channel of their blood, and into the pool of their blood in the market-place, that I might raise up the memorial of the blood of those martyrs which had been shed above a thousand years before, and lay cold in their streets. So the sense of this blood was upon me, and I obeyed the word of the Lord. Ancient records testify how many of the Christian Britons suffered there; and much I could write of the sense I had of the blood of the martyrs that hath been shed in this nation for the name of Christ, both under the ten persecutions and since; but I leave it to the Lord, and to his book, out of which all shall be judged; for his book is a most certain true record, and his spirit a true recorder."

Lichfield market-place, under the shadow of the beautiful rose-warm three-spired cathedral, has witnessed two strange spectacles: bare-footed George Fox, as we have now seen him, striding to and fro, and crying with his stentorian lungs, "Woe to the bloody city;" and in the next century the great Samuel Johnson, standing there, shivering, pathetically, bare-headed in the rain, doing penance for his ingratitude to his father. Why should we judge either of them? Were it not more seemly, like Fox himself, to leave it to the Lord, and His book, out of which all many another strange scene besides these shall be judged? We may not yield to this impulse, because this extraordinary be-

haviour of George Fox was perhaps the germ of more distressing displays by his followers. It is to be noted that he himself was perplexed by the occurrence, though he never doubted that he had obeyed a Divine impulse. He sought for an explanation, but that which satisfied his mind is open to obvious objections. Seeing that Fox lived long before the scientific study of history began, we could not expect him to consider that the Lichfieldians of his day had little more connection with the ancient Britons than the English in New Zealand have with the Maoris: nor should we insist much upon the merely legendary character of the tradition. Still, allowing George Fox to take the history as it shaped itself to his contemporaries, it might be pointed out to him that the responsibility for the massacre rested upon Diocletian and his Romans, and that Lichfield furnished the martyrs: consequently it was Rome not Lichfield which deserved the reproach of being "the bloody city." It had been more appropriate to call the Lichfield folk among whom he moved, to repent of the civil strife which had stained the aisles of their fair cathedral with the blood of fellow-townsmen then hardly dry. But waiving aside Fox's after-thought, another explanation is offered by his narrative. It was the three spires which "struck at his life." The cathedral in Fox's eyes was an idol: its will-worship offensive to God: its priests, hireling shepherds, who slew the flock, and were guilty of its blood. His Bible, over which he had pored so constantly that almost every line and word was imprinted on his brain, had told him that an ancient prophet of God, Ezekiel, denounced Jerusalem, in the midst of which Jehovah's temple raised its stately height, as

the cathedral in the midst of Lichfield, crying against it, "Woe to the bloody city." Though not consciously remembered by him at that moment, we can trace in this old Hebrew Scripture the original of his prophetic cry. But the Hebrew prophets had not been content with mere verbal protests: they had been commanded to present their own bodies in strange and humiliating ways as signs to the people. Isaiah had stripped himself and gone naked in Jerusalem. Oftentimes must Fox have wondered at the record. Now the impulse seizes him, though without conscious memory of the precedent, to do something of the kind, and he imagines himself to be divinely ordered to put off his shoes. Such is the explanation which offers itself as more probable than his own.

The language of signs is probably older than that of sounds, and among the ancient Hebrews it was still a living language, to a much greater extent than it is among ourselves. They tore their clothing to express anger, put on sack-cloth and sprinkled themselves with ashes, to express their grief. Hebrew prophets in employing sign language were making use of the most powerful vehicle for conveying their meaning which they possessed. But in the seventeenth century in England these methods were an anachronism, and it is a mark of George Fox's strong common sense that he felt this, as appears from his attempt to explain the one instance in which he tried the method, and from his never again resorting to it more. His followers, and especially caught up the idea and carried it to much greater lengths. But we should judge them too harshly, we must bear in mind that to the early Quakers two things

were indisputably certain; one was the inspiration of the Bible, the other was their own inspiration. Both these inspirations were infallible: and to doubt their own inspiration was to call in question that of the Bible; for was not the same Spirit, who was the source of Biblical inspiration, distinctly promised to them by the Bible itself? From these premises it followed that everything done by Isaiah, Hosea, Ezekiel, and the other prophets, by command of God, however offensive to their feelings, must be right and good: that what God had commanded before He might command again: and that should He command it, His believing people must at all costs obey. From this iron chain of logic, there was for them, of course, no possible escape; but still one fails to see the last link by which this logic was welded to action. How was it that the Quakers passed from the belief that God *might* require of them certain painful acts of obedience, to the assured persuasion that He had actually commanded them to perform these acts? This they could not explain. All we know is that during the first generation of quakerism many of them did experience such a persuasion, and did act upon it, to the intense astonishment and disgust of their more sober-minded contemporaries.

Fox stopped at taking off his shoes, but others outwent him a long way. On one page of his Journal he describes three remarkable instances. Robert Huntington "was moved of the Lord to go into Carlisle steeplehouse, with a white sheet about him, amongst the great Presbyterians and Independents there, to show them that the surplice was coming up again: and he put an halter about his neck, to show them that an halter was

coming up on them: which was fulfilled upon some of our persecutors not long after."¹ No date is given for this prophetic sign, which as to its form was inoffensive, if ludicrous. Nor can we think that poor Richard Sale deserved his sad fate, who, on a lecture day, "was moved to go to the steeple-house in the time of their worship, and to carry those persecuting priests and people a lantern and a candle, as a figure of their darkness: but they cruelly altered him, and like dark professors as they were, they put him into their prison called Little-Ease: and so squeezed his body therein that not long after he died." Fox saw in these signs God's warning to the persecutors, but those who were warned saw only the eccentricities of "giddy-headed Quakers." If such signs as the above produced a suspicion of the perfect sanity of the Quaker prophets, what are we to think of this, which Fox recounts first of the three? "William Symonds was moved of the Lord to go out several times for three years naked and bare-foot before them, as a sign unto them; in markets, courts, towns, cities, to priests' houses, and to great men's houses, telling them, so should they be all stripped naked, as he was stripped naked. And sometimes he was moved to put on his iron-shod boots, and to beat men like flint, and to tell them so would the Lord God be doing all their religion, as he was being so. Great suffering. But that poor man underwent more whippings with our whips, and cruel whips on his bare body, yellows, beatings, and imprisonments, in three years time, before the King came in, that they might have taken warning: but they would not: but rewarded him even with cruel usage." Only the

¹ *Journals*, I. 493.

Mayor of Cambridge did nobly to him, for he put his gown about him, and took him into his house."

William Sympson's fashion of offering himself as a sign appears to have been somewhat frequently adopted. Fox relates two other instances, and in another place speaks of an indefinite number; and we meet with frequent reference to the practice in early quaker literature. Pepys, in his diary for July 29, 1667, writes: "One thing extraordinary was, this day a man, a Quaker, came naked through the Hall, [Westminster Hall] only very civilly tied about the loins to avoid scandal; and with a claving dish of fire and brimstone burning upon his head, did pass through the Hall, crying, 'Repent!' 'Repent!'" One would like to think that William Sympson and the rest were like this man "civilly tied about the loins;" but I fear it was not always so, for Fox denies the interpretation of Isaiah's nakedness after this fashion; and the coarse language used by Samuel Fisher¹ is incompatible with the supposition of any regard for decency. There is no blinking the fact that Fox, Howgill, Fisher, Penn, and the other Quaker writers unhesitatingly regarded these naked men as acting by Divine impulse. Fox expressly states this: "And the Lord made one to go naked among you; a figure of your nakedness, that you might see that you were naked, and not covered with the truth."

There seems to have been a sort of mania for becoming a sign, which infected even a gentleman and a scholar like Robert Barclay. One can see in his case, how the idea could suddenly seize upon and fascinate its victim, persuading him that the greater his repugnance to obey,

¹ *Rusticus ad Academicos.*

the greater the merit in obedience, the more terrible the judgment, should he resist the command of the Lord. One morning, quite unexpectedly, Barclay, a wealthy young gentleman of ancient family and landed estate, then twenty-four years old, awoke to feel himself summoned by a Divine mandate, to go, clothed in sack-cloth, and sprinkled with ashes, through the streets of Aberdeen, calling the people to repentance. He could not, like Fox, obey the command on the instant. Fox, after that day in his early career when he was struck blind for disobedience, when the command of the Lord came, fulfilled it at once; and when there was any danger, he preferred to encounter it alone, as in Nottingham church, and the Lichfield market-place. Colonel Barclay's son cannot be suspected of physical cowardice, but he shrank from humiliation. The burden seemed intolerable, and he was obliged to seek the sympathy and advice of his friends. He besought the Lord with tears that this cup might pass from him; but in vain. Friends encouraged him: he freely gave up to the Lord's will: that same day he took up his cross, and discharged the hard commission. Immediately his burden was removed, and serenity returned. "I have peace with my God," he wrote, "and am satisfied that his requirements I have answered in this thing." He published an eloquent and touching address to explain his remarkable procedure, and enforce its lessons; but it is noticeable that with him as with Fox, once was enough. Some years after, Andrew Jaffray, who had been provost, trod in Barclay's steps, stripped to the waist. Solomon Eccles was another of the sanctified prophets. When in Ireland in 1669, he entered a Roman Catholic chapel in Galway,

during mass, "naked above his waist, with a chafing dish of coals and burning brimstone upon his head," and cried out, "Woe to these idolatrous worshippers. God hath sent me this day to warn you, and to show you what will be your portion, except you repent."¹ I think it was he who startled the Londoners during the great plague, by stalking through the city denouncing woe in a similar manner.

The frenzy worked among the women also. Two women entered St. Paul's Cathedral during the time of worship, their hair hanging down, and saturated with blood, so that it dripped upon the pavement as they walked. In this state they approached the altar, on which they poured blood, uttering some words which appear to have been inaudible.² At Dieppe a Quakeress and her maid went to the Protestant meeting-house on Sunday where a crowded congregation was assembled. They secured a conspicuous place near the pulpit, and before the service was concluded, they stood up. The maid removed her mistress's mantle and hood, when she was seen to be clothed in sack-cloth, and her hair hanging down, sprinkled with ashes; then she turned herself round several times that all the people might see her: both the women fell down upon their knees and prayed, and then they went out of the meeting, many following them, among whom they distributed books. The Quaker historian considers that she meant this as a sign to testify against their pride in apparel.³ Sarah Gold-

¹ *History of the Quakers in Ireland*, by Wight & Rutty, p. 119.

² *The London Friends' Meetings*, by W. Beck & T. F. Ball, 1869, p. 141.

³ *Sewel's History*, Vol. III., p. 297.

smith dressed herself in sack-cloth and with dishevelled hair and dirt upon her head, passed through Bristol streets, and stood up at the high cross in the market-place, as a sign against pride.¹ In Barbadoes, Margaret Brewster disfigured her face, let her hair hang loose about her shoulders, put ashes on her head, and sack-cloth over her clothing, and in that state went to the church at Spilhat's Bay when the priest and the people were at worship.² In this instance a copy of the mittimus which consigned her to prison, helps us to imagine the effects produced by the unseemly apparition: a startled congregation, children frightened, women nearly fainting: Margaret Brewster decidedly made an impression, though probably not of the kind which she desired.

Unhappily, there is worse yet to tell. As William Symonds imitated Isaiah, so there were Quaker women imitated enough to imitate William Symonds. We can hardly blame the Quakers for their total inability to resist that stigma which shocked London by its indecency, and it have been far less effective in ancient Jerusalem. The prophet did not travel in William Symonds's days, and the crowd came to him and he kindled an altar of protest. To the numerous Englishmen of our time who have been daily accustomed in human and elsewhere to the sight of almost totally nude men, the self-humiliation of the royal prophet in exhibiting himself like a common coolie, presents itself in an altogether different aspect from that which it wore in William Symonds's eyes. He thought that he was clearly representing the predicament of the prophet, but was grossly mistaken: still for him there was the excuse that he

¹ *Bristol's History*, year 1660.

² *Ibid.* Year 1673.

had what he supposed to be a precedent, in the recorded acts of Scripture prophets. This palliation cannot be pleaded for the women who outraged the modesty of their sex, exposing themselves naked in public places after Sympson's fashion. If these painful stories were only found in writers hostile to the Friends, one might pass them by as possibly baseless calumnies; but Besse, the Quaker historian of the persecutions of his brethren, narrates two such events, giving names, places, and dates. He neither commends nor rebukes the actors, though it is plain he was not so confident of their divine commission as Fox was in regard to that of Sympson. So far as my reading goes, no Quaker writer has justified these women; on the contrary, when taunted with their indecency by opponents, they display manifest reluctance to acknowledge the facts. Their reluctance is honourable to their sense of natural modesty, and nothing but the imperative duty of an historian overcomes my own reluctance to refer to these worst exhibitions of quaker fanaticism.

There is a generic likeness in all these cases, from Fox's walking barefoot and Barclay's sackcloth, to the indecent conduct of Sympson and others. In all one perceives an unconscious or deliberate imitation of Scripture precedent. In all there is an element of self-sacrifice, consenting to do violence to one's own feelings, to expose oneself to ridicule, contempt, and suffering, in obedience to a supposed command of God. These symbolic actions were a straining towards a desired end, a desperate effort to impress unbelievers with the conviction which possessed themselves, of their divine mission. "You see with your eyes," they said, "that

we Quakers are as sure of our inspiration as were the Scripture prophets whom you acknowledge : we dare do as they did, even though it shocks your fine feelings and hurts our own. We are made visible signs to you of the truth of our message : and we are willing to endure any degree of shame and suffering, if so be we can prevail upon you to repent and receive our message." Disgust at the performances must not blind us to the evident sincerity of the performers : but, their sincerity being admitted, what guarantee have we, that there was not mingled with it, a measure of diseased desire for notoriety, of which they were not conscious ? The mental pathology of fanaticism is little understood. A suggestion has been made that the barbarous treatment the Quakers experienced affected their reason. Probably there was action and re-action. The excesses of fanaticism provoked persecution to proceed to barbarous extremes ; and the ruthless cruelties of persecutors provoked the fanatics to obstinate repetition of their offences. William Simpson was not deterred by his whippings.

It has been necessary to note and weigh these unpleasant aspects of early quakerism ; but a caution is needed, not to attach too much importance to them. The known cases are few, and doubtless if all that actually occurred had been recorded, the total would still be small, compared with the whole number of the Quakers. Were there more than a dozen, or a score, or so, at the most ? As Fox's single extravagance at Lichfield is outweighed by the whole influence of a long and consistently sober-minded life, as Robert Barclay's sackcloth day in Aberdeen is counter-balanced by the years of grave piety and solid scholarship of which his great Apology was the

fruit ; so the fanaticism of quakerism, taken at its worst, was but a small fraction of a great spiritual force, of which true godliness and Christian faith were the chief elements. There was also a marked diminution in these signs in the second generation ; and when the third generation of quakerism comes on the stage, the signs are matters of history, and the Quaker historians are by no means quite sure that the actors of them were veritably impelled by an immediate divine inspiration.

Whatever judgment we pass upon these eccentricities they were part of quakerism, endured or not disclaimed, by the recognised body of Friends. Evidently Fox, Barclay, and as far as we know all the others, men and women, to the last retained the belief that they had been impelled by the spirit of God. It was quite otherwise in the case of James Nayler, whose shocking aberration has now to be described. He was warned, expostulated with, and repudiated, before his public offence ; and during the whole course of his insane behaviour, he was the leader of a revolt. Instead of persisting in his delusion, he bitterly bewailed and repented it, re-instating himself among the Friends, by the completeness of his recantation, and the unmistakable sincerity of his contrition. Thus the whole sad story might fairly be passed by, as not pertaining to the true current of quakerism, yet seeing that it branched off from that current, it will be better not to ignore it. Nayler, son of a Yorkshire farmer, Fox's senior by nine years, was one of Cromwell's warriors. He joined at the outset of the war, and served with credit and promotion, until Scotland was conquered. Invalided in 1649, he returned to his plough and his family. At this time he was a mem-

ber of an Independent Church, which excommunicated him, after he had accepted Fox's doctrines in 1651. The editor of the published report of his trial states that he had seen a letter signed by the pastor and others, which asserted that Nayler was guilty of immoral conduct. Fox either did not hear of the accusation, or disbelieved it. The two fought side by side in closest amity, during the first hot excitement of their fierce assault upon the priests and the steeple-houses. Nayler calls Fox "his dear brother George," and joins him in writing "Saul's errand to Damascus," a protest against their persecutors. In education, in eloquence, in intellectual power, Nayler may have been the superior. One of Cromwell's officers attracted by the sight of a crowd, drew near and found they were listening to Nayler. He stood rooted to the spot, scared and trembling; and acknowledged afterwards that James Nayler's preaching terrified him more than the Scots at Dunbar. We have an interesting glimpse of Nayler through the eyes of young Tom Ellwood, who met him at the house of Isaac Penington after his fall and recovery. Squire Ellwood, Tom's father, was not at all inclined to accept the heresy which had infected his friend Penington, and relying upon his theological reading and skill in disputation, tackled the Quakers. Edward Burroughs also was there on the knotty subject, predestination: but soon found that the simple-looking Friends were more than his match. Thomas Ellwood tells us that Nayler looked like a plain simple countryman, a husbandman or shepherd, but he handled his subject with so much perspicuity and clear demonstration that his reasoning seemed to be irresistible.

Of a gentle and loving disposition, persuasive in argument and powerful in denunciation, of ascetic habits—once he fasted for fifteen days,—James Nayler stood in the front rank of the Quaker leaders, hardly second to Fox himself: but the admiration and affection he attracted caused a miserable downfall. George Fox conspicuously, and hardly less the other Quaker preachers, present themselves before us in the historical records as men devoid of egotism, to an almost incredible degree. Envy, jealousy, self-assertion, self-seeking, appear to have utterly died out of their hearts. Nayler was an exception to this self-effacement. Following Howgill, and Burroughs to London, he was greatly admired as a preacher, and a little group, mostly of women, flattered and caressed him. Some forward women disturbed the meetings by disputes with Howgill and Burroughs, and being rebuked, appealed to Nayler for support. The subject in dispute is not stated, but can be discovered from what followed. The quaker doctrine of Christ dwelling and ruling in the heart of the believer easily lent itself to mystic pantheistic imaginations, and already Fox and Nayler had been accused in the north of identifying themselves with Christ. On his trial before Justice Pearson at Appleby, in 1652, Nayler acknowledged that his assertion of Christ's dwelling in him meant a spiritual indwelling by faith. But now these silly women began to adore the Christ within James Nayler, as though the Divine Word had appeared in a second incarnation; and Nayler intoxicated by the sweet incense of their flatteries, first endured, then accepted the homage. Martha Symonds and Hannah Stranger addressed him as the Everlasting Son of Righteousness, Fairest among ten

thousand, Prince of Peace, King of Israel, the Son of God. Their husbands shared in their infatuation, John Stranger writing to him, "Thy name is no more to be called James, but Jesus." To excited imaginations there was a recognizable likeness between the features of Nayler and the portrait of the Saviour, said to have been sent to Rome in the days of Tiberius Caesar; and in the account of his trial Nayler is accused of studying to increase the resemblance by his manner of wearing his hair and beard. Unable to face the censure of his brother preachers, Nayler travelled westward, followed by a little band. He was imprisoned at Exeter, where these women knelt before him, and kissed his feet. Dorcas Erbury asserted in her evidence at the trial, that she died in Exeter prison, was dead two days, and that Nayler raised her from the dead; and she said that her mother was witness of the miracle. Fox coming to Exeter, visited Nayler and the other Quakers in the prison, and laboured for three days to convince him and his followers of their delusions, but in vain. In the end Fox refused to acknowledge brotherhood with the schismatics, and left them with something like an excommunication. Yet it does not appear that George Fox fully realised the pitch of insanity of which they were about to give startling evidence. When Nayler was released from the gaol, he journeyed by Glastonbury and Wells, attended by six of his followers. On the way the fanatics spread some of their garments in the road before him. Drawing nigh to Bristol one of these Quakers, who would not doff their hats to the Lord High Protector nor to the Chief Justice on the bench, walked bareheaded in the roadway before James Nayler. Another of them led Nayler's horse by

the bridle; two of the women splashed and waded knee deep in mud, one on each side of his horse; the others followed on the footpath; and so through the falling rain on that autumn day, the crazy company entered the city, chanting as they tramped through the mire, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Hosannah in the highest." In the city they were immediately arrested, and the gravity of the offence led the magistrates to send them up to be tried by the Parliament. Their case occupied the House for about twelve days. In his examination Nayler answered ambiguously, and sometimes refused to answer at all. Asked "Art thou the Everlasting Son of God?" he replied, "Where God is manifest in the flesh, there is the Everlasting Son of God; and I do witness God in the flesh. I am the Son of God, and the Son of God is but one." To a previous question, "Art thou the only Son of God?" he answered, "I am the Son of God, but I have many brethren;" yet he was not prepared to admit that the others were sent from God as he was sent. After his recovery he tried to think that his fault was limited to not refusing the divine honours paid to him by the women, and that he had not positively accepted and claimed the dignity they ascribed to him.

The sentences passed upon the women are not recorded, but they were imprisoned, probably also whipped. As for Nayler his sentence was severe enough, although many of his judges no doubt thought they were erring on the side of leniency in not sentencing him to be burnt for blasphemy. He was pilloried at Westminster, scourged to the centre of London, pilloried there, his tongue was bored with a hot iron, he was taken to

Bristol, whipped there, and then brought back to London to be imprisoned at hard labour during the pleasure of Parliament. His first whipping was so severe, that the tongue-boring had to be postponed for a week. Meantime the severity of the sentence moved public compassion, and petitions were sent both to Parliament and to the Protector for a partial remission. Cromwell sent five eminent ministers to visit him the day before Christmas, but Nayler was stubborn, and their report of the interview decided Cromwell not to interfere.

Shut up in Bridewell, after a time the unhappy man's sanity returned; and he heartily repented the scandal he had caused. Reproaching himself for lack of watchfulness, and for weak yielding to others, acknowledging that darkness came over him, and that he was under the power of the adversary, he does not excuse himself on the ground of insanity; and it is not easy to pronounce an opinion as to the exact nature of his mental disturbance. But no doubt hangs over the thoroughness of his repentance. How he got out of prison we do not know; but he was released before 1659, and obtained reconciliation with his brethren. He resumed his labours with his old earnestness and something of his former power, but his sufferings seem to have undermined his constitution, and in 1660 he died, while on the road journeying to his home in the north.

CHAPTER VIII.

MIRACLES AND PROPHECIES.

A DIVINE message to men may conceivably be accredited by external signs, or rely solely upon its internal evidence appealing to the witness in every man's conscience. The early Quakers, while fully accepting the common belief of their age in the miracles and predictions recorded in the Scriptures, founded their own claims to be received as the messengers of God entirely upon the character of their message. Isaac Penington says, "It is likewise excepted against us that we do not work miracles;" and replies that it was enough for them to feel and live in the moving of the power of God's Spirit. In a great dispute at Amsterdam between the famous Baptist, Dr. Galemus Abrahams, on the one side, and Penn, Barclay, and Fox on the other, Abrahams laid it down as incontrovertible that miracles are required to accredit a messenger from God. Penn argued that the Christian religion having been once already confirmed by miracles, a repetition of the proof was unnecessary. On quaker principles, indeed, it is easier to see that miracles are unnecessary now than that they were necessary at any time. The child of the Light was convinced by the Light, which was for him a perfect proof; and he believed that a spark of the same divine Light was shining in every human heart, only

requiring to be attended to and obeyed, in order to increase to the same clear and convincing Light as he himself enjoyed. When this attention and obedience were given, miracles were not needed: if the divine Light were neglected and disobeyed, the plainest miracles would not convince.

Quakerism being thus on its own showing independent of external evidence, one would not expect to meet with miraculous events in its history. But the Children of the Light were greatly influenced by Scripture precedent. They believed without question the inspiration of the Bible: they believed that prophets and apostles healed the sick, raised the dead, foretold the future; they believed that God had given to them the same Spirit; naturally the occurrence of similar signs in connection with their ministry could not seem incredible to them. Their detractors accused them of expecting and attempting miracles:¹ and the crazy women who buzzed around Naylor gave some countenance to the charge: but these were disavowed by the Quakers, and must not be taken as representative. The great majority of their leaders, either by direct statements, such as those of Penington and Penn just quoted, or by refraining from laying claim to miraculous powers in their Church, accepted the fact that miracles did not occur within their knowledge. George Fox, however, held a somewhat different position. He did not strain after miracles: he did not appeal to them as evidences: he rarely, if ever, mentioned them in his discourses or in the writings published during his life; but in his

¹ *The Fragmentary History; or an Exact Relation and Account of the Old Anabaptists and New Quakers.*—London, 1660.—Chap. v.

journal he asserts that miracles were wrought by several. Replying to a correspondent who seems to have reasoned like Galenus Abrahams, Fox wrote: "As for the signs which followed those that believed, which thou sayest are ceased, I say, they who cannot receive the light cannot see the signs, nor could believe them if they should see them to carp at; no more than formerly they could do, who opposed the light in former ages: they cannot properly be said to cease to such, who never had them, but have only heard or read, that others long ago had them. But that the power, and signs, and presence of God, is not the same as ever it was, in the measure wherein he is received in the light, that I deny."¹ Credulous Fox may have been, but he was clear-sighted enough to perceive the error of his opponents. They persuaded themselves that they accepted the Bible because it was attested by miracles, whereas, in truth, "they never had the miracles:" for them the miracles had no existence, apart from the testimony of the Book, which they supposed to rest upon their evidence. Fox was, at least, logically consistent. He believed the Scripture revelation, not on the ground of miracles, but because he saw its truth; he believed in the miracles of Scripture without difficulty, because he believed that similar events had happened within the range of his own experience. It is remarkable that in this latter belief he was so little supported by his followers, who however have handed down his own statements on the subject without note or comment. A brief review of the instances he gives, and of the evidence in their favour may be interesting. The

¹ *Journal*, I. 362.

miraculous generally appeals to us from remote ages and regions; here in seventeenth century England, it is almost next door to us, and one may be excused a curious desire to examine it and its evidence.

Passing by cases of answers to prayer, for those which bear a closer resemblance to Scripture miracles; the earliest recorded in the journal took place soon after Fox's release from his first imprisonment. "Coming to Mansfield-woodhouse, there was a distracted woman under a doctor's hand, with her hair loose all about her ears; and he was about to let her blood, she being first bound, and many people being about her, holding her by violence: but he could get no blood from her. And I desired them to unbind her and let her alone, for they could not touch the spirit in her by which she was tormented. So they did unbind her. And I was moved to speak to her, and in the name of the Lord to bid her be quiet and still: and she was so. And the Lord's power settled her mind, and she mended, and afterwards received the truth, and continued in it to her death. And the Lord's name was honoured: to whom the glory of all his works belongs. Many great and wonderful things were wrought by the heavenly power in those days: for the Lord made bare his omnipotent arm: and manifested his power to the astonishment of many, by the healing virtue whereof many have been delivered from great infirmities, and the devils were made subject through his name: of which particular instances might be given beyond what this unbelieving age is able to receive or bear."¹ Fox evidently does not intend us to suppose that the few cases recorded by him are all that

¹ *Journal*, I. 107.

came within his knowledge. Yet there are some remarkable ones. Richard Myer and James Milner made the first schism in the quaker community. Rebuked by Fox, they repented and returned. "After some time," Fox writes, "I went to a meeting at Arnside where Richard Myer was. Now he had been long lame of one of his arms; and I was moved of the Lord to say unto him, amongst all the people, 'Prophet Myer, stand up upon thy legs.' For he was sitting down. And he stood up, and stretched out his arm that had been lame a long time, and said, 'Be it known unto you, all people, that this day I am healed.' But his parents could hardly believe it; but after the meeting was done had him aside, and took off his doublet, and then they saw it was true. He came soon after to Swarthmore meeting, and there declared how the Lord had healed him."¹ Fox's wonderful power over the mentally-afflicted is illustrated by an occurrence in America. "At this meeting was a woman that lived at Anamessy, who had been many years in trouble of mind, and sometimes would sit moping near two months together, and hardly speak or mind anything. When I heard of her, I was moved of the Lord to go to her, and tell her that salvation was come to her house. And after I had spoken the word of life to her, and intreated the Lord for her, she mended, and went up and down with us to meetings, and is since well; blessed be the Lord!"²

For the above cases, we have no testimony except Fox's own assertion. Outside Fox's journal, the references to miracles are scanty and vague: but there is one exception, a remarkable and interesting exception, which

¹ *Journal*, I. 199.² *Journal*, II. 164.

must not be withheld. John Banks, a worthy Quaker preacher who was converted in 1654 and lived till 1710, who, like many of the early Friends, imitated Fox in keeping a journal, narrates a miracle of which he was the subject and George Fox the instrument. "About this time," he writes in 1676, "a pain struck me in my shoulder which gradually fell down into my arm and hand, so that the use thereof I was wholly deprived of; and not only so, but my pain greatly increased both day and night; and for three months I neither put my clothes on nor off myself, and my arm and hand began to wither, so that I did seek to some physicians for cure, but no cure could I get by any of them, until at last, as I was asleep in my bed in the night time, I saw in a vision that I was with dear George Fox, and I thought I said unto him: 'George, my faith is such, that if thou seest it thy way to lay thy hand upon my shoulder, my arm and hand shall be made whole throughout;' which remained with me after I awaked, two days and nights, that the thing was a true vision, and that I must go to George Fox: until at last through much exercise of mind, as a new and great trial of my faith, I was made willing to go to him, he being then at Swarthmore in Lancashire, where there was a meeting of Friends, being on the first day of the week. And sometime after the meeting, I called him aside into the hall, and gave him a relation of my concerns as aforesaid, showing him my arm and hand: and in a little time, we walking together silent, he turned about and looked upon me, lifting up his hand, and laid it upon my shoulder and said, 'The Lord strengthen thee both within and without.' And so we parted, and I went to Thomas Lower's, of Marsh

Grange, that night; and when I was set down to supper in his house, immediately before I was aware, my hand was lifted up to do its office, which it could not for so long as aforesaid; which struck me into a great admiration, and my heart was broken into true tenderness before the Lord; and the next day I went home, with my hand and arm restored to its former use, without any pain. And the next time that George Fox and I met, he readily said, 'John, thou mended, thou mended,' I answered 'Yes; very well, in a little time.' 'Well,' said he, 'give God the glory;' to whom I was and am still bound in duty so to do, for that and all other his mercies and favours, who hath all power in his own hand, and can thereby bring to pass whatever seems good in his eyes; who by the same fits and prepares instruments, and makes use thereof as pleaseth him, who is alone worthy of all praise, honour, and glory, both now and for evermore. Amen."¹

John Banks can be known from his journal. He was a man of vehement and sturdy character, who toiled and suffered for the truth unweariedly. More than once he had a remarkable dream, which he accepted as from God; but he does not appear to have been one to whom marvels were every-day occurrences. This account of his cure through the instrumentality of George Fox is the one solitary instance of the kind in his journal. There does not seem to be the shadow of a reason for hesitating to accept this narrative as a true account so far as the facts are concerned; and its acceptance removes any prejudice, if such existed, against George Fox's narratives. But indeed, to those who know the amount of

¹ *Friends' Library*, Vol. IX., p. 395.

evidence for the occurrence of similar cures by similar means in our own day, it will not be difficult to believe that these honest Quakers are perfectly trustworthy in their relation of what came within their own experience. So they saw and heard, so the phenomena appeared both to their senses and their understanding. Whether they were right in their interpretation of their experience, and what exactly that interpretation was, let the reader judge. As to the latter point, without attempting any definition of miracle, I think it is certain that Fox used the word, in the sense which he put upon it in the only Book with which he was familiar. Undoubtedly he saw in these cures, the finger of God; but he also saw the finger of God everywhere. Here I must leave the subject. The list of these works of healing might be increased by the addition of one or two more, but of none more remarkable; and at its utmost the list is a short one.

Prophecies occupy decidedly a more important place than miracles in the quaker story. Among the Children of Light, a prophet was one who by inspiration spake the word of the Lord. To predict the future was not necessarily included in his function. Some of their prophets however, did foretell future events; and some of their predictions were, it was supposed, fulfilled in a remarkable manner. Miracles, whether of George Fox or any other, are attended with this disadvantage as evidence; that when once they are past there is no possible way of getting at them for the purpose of verification. Fox felt this deficiency, when he wrote that "particular instances might be given beyond what this unbelieving age is able to receive." Of what use would

it have been for him to appeal to the evidence of his own miracles, and to produce John Banks, and other Quakers, as witnesses, when he and they were all regarded as fanatics, impostors, jesuits, spawn of the devil, and so forth? We who know the Quakers better, and judge them more truly than their contemporaries, cannot put them into the witness-box, to ascertain exactly what they did, what they saw, and what they meant. Prophecies offer much greater facilities to the inquirer. Publicly uttered predictions would be remembered by hundreds and by thousands: predictions written down and printed can now be compared with their alleged fulfilments. Hence, if not more potent as evidence, they are more producible, and it is only natural that those who believed that they saw the prophecies fulfilled under their very eyes, should point to them triumphantly. We of the after age can congratulate ourselves on the possibility of coming, by comparison of dates and scrutiny of facts, to some definite conclusion in this department of inquiry. It will be worth while therefore, to take pains to set forth accurately what these predictions were, and what the alleged fulfilments.

Turning in the first place to the journal of George Fox, he saw in the return of King Charles, followed by the execution of the regicides, and the ejection of the puritans from power and of the Presbyterian clergy from their benefices, a clear fulfilment of the prophecies delivered by the Quakers in the time of the Commonwealth. William Sympson and the others who made themselves signs were prophets also. Fox writes: "Many ways were these professors warned, both by word, by writing, and by signs . . . many warnings of many sorts were

friends moved in the power of the Lord to give to that generation, which they not only rejected, but abused friends, calling us giddy-headed Quakers."¹ After the restoration, "God brought his judgments upon those persecuting priests and magistrates," and Fox with a very natural feeling, adds, "then we could ask them, who were the giddy heads now?"² and he records it as a fact, "then many did confess we had been true prophets to the nation." It cannot reasonably be contested that the Quakers during the Cromwellian era, openly and repeatedly denounced coming judgment upon their persecutors: and that, after the restoration, upon many of these very men signal judgments fell. Whatever natural satisfaction Fox felt in this evident fulfilment of prophecy, he was too tender-hearted, too Christian, to take pleasure in the sufferings of his old tormentors. The paragraph in which he refers to this matter deserves to be extracted for the insight it gives into the genuine humanity of the much-suffering, much-forgiving leader of the Quaker. "Much blood was shed this year, many of them that had been the old King's judges being hanged, drawn and quartered. And amongst them that so suffered, Colonel Hacker was one, he who sent me prisoner from Leicester to London in Oliver's time, of which an account is given before. A sad day it was, and a repaying of blood with blood. For in the time of Oliver Cromwell, when several men were put to death by him, being hanged, drawn and quartered for pretended treasons, I felt from the Lord God that their blood would not be put up, but would be required: and I said as much then to several. And now upon the

¹ *Journal*, I. 433.

² *Ibid.*, p. 491.

King's return, when several of them that had been against the King were put to death, as the others that were for the King, had been before by Oliver; this was sad work, destroying of people contrary to the nature of Christians, who have the natures of lambs and sheep."¹ Fox was too large-hearted to be moved by the sufferings of Quakers only: it was a sad day for him when their persecutors were brought out for execution. Nevertheless, it would be strange had he not seen in this an interposition of God on behalf of His suffering children. "And He did hear the cries of His people and did bring an overflowing scourge over the heads of all our persecutors, which brought a quaking, and a dread, and a fear amongst, and on them all: so that they, who had nicknamed us, (who are the children of light), and in scorn called us Quakers, the Lord made them quake, and many of them would have been glad to have hid themselves amongst us; and some of them, through the distress that came upon them, did at length come to confess to the truth."²

So far as yet appears, these quaker prophecies, admittedly fulfilled in their own generation, were not of a definite character. They announced in general language that God would interfere for His people and execute vengeance upon their enemies; but nothing was said beforehand as to the time, or manner of the fulfilment. That the Almighty will some day, and in some way, either in this world or the next, right all wrongs, deliver His suffering children, and punish the wicked, is an article of faith among Theists, and an instinctive expectation of the human heart. Is it not then possible

¹ *Journal*, I. 491.

² *Journal*, I. 492.

that mere general utterances of this faith, addressed as warnings to their adversaries, were after the downfall of those adversaries supposed to have had a more distinctly predictive character than they actually had? For instance, take the case of poor Colonel Hacker, who seems to have been very reluctant to injure Fox; the Journal says, Colonel Hacker had Fox to his bedside and bade him go home, and keep no more meetings. "I told him, I could not submit to that, but must have my liberty to serve God, and to go to meetings. Then, said he, you must go before the Prot et al. Whereupon I kneeled on his bedside, and besought the Lord to forgive him, for he was as Pilate, though he would wash his hands; and when the day of his misery and trial should come upon him, I bid him then remember, what I had said to him."¹ Hacker did remember it when preparing himself for Tyburn, and confessed to some Quakers who visited him that he was troubled about what he then did. Near as prediction and fulfilment correspond in this case, it yet does not appear on close examination that in 1654 George Fox had any foresight of what was going to happen six years after. His prophecy would have been equally fulfilled on the supposition that Hacker had escaped all judgment in this life, and had suffered for his sin in the invisible world.

However, George Fox believed that he was gifted with a measure of foresight into the future; as appears from three instances recorded in his Journal. "Being one day in Swarthmore Hall, when Judge Fell and Justice Benson were talking of the news in the news-book, and of the Parliament that was sitting (which was

¹ *Journal*, I. 239.

called the Long Parliament) I was moved to tell them that before that day two weeks the Parliament should be broken up, and the Speaker plucked from his chair. And that day two weeks Justice Benson coming thither again told Judge Fell that now he saw George was a true prophet, for Oliver had broken up the Parliament by that time."¹ While he was a prisoner in Lancaster Castle he foresaw and foretold the defeat of the Turks; and at another time an angel with a glittering drawn sword, prefigured the wars with Holland, the plague and the fire of London.² As to these cases, they rest upon his own statement only; it does not appear that he wrote the visions down at the time of receiving them; and we have no means of verification. Thomas Aldam's prophecy against Cromwell, related in the *Journal*, is more open to examination. Aldam and Anthony Pearson were moved to go to all the gaols in England and collect particulars of the Friends who were suffering there. These they laid before the Protector. "And when he would not give order for the releasing of them, Thomas Aldam was moved to take his cap from off his head, and to rend it in pieces before him, and to say unto him, 'So shall thy government be rent from thee and thy house.'"³ Here we have a definite prediction, which, strictly interpreted, was half-falsified and half-fulfilled. The Government was not rent from Cromwell during his life-time; it was rent from his successor. At this point we may leave Fox's *Journal* for the present, reserving his prophecies of the triumph of quakerism until we have completed the survey of those relating to past events.

¹ *Journal*, I. 198.² *Ibid*, II. 57.³ *Ibid*, I. 445.

The two Quaker prophets whose predictions were, in the opinion of their fellow-believers, most signally fulfilled in their own time, were Edward Burroughs, whom we already know, and a second George Fox who has not hitherto been introduced in these pages. This George Fox, a Suffolk man, not of kin to the founder of the Quakers, was styled George Fox the Younger. He joined the Quakers early, and was a faithful and honoured preacher until his death. In the preface to his Collected Writings, which reached a second edition in 1665, his prophecies are adduced as a proof of the divine origin of quaker doctrine: "The work itself may plainly appear to be of God. In one respect by his prophecies, certain of which came to be fulfilled whilst he bore the body about him." Of Edward Burroughs also it is said: "He fore-propheciéd unto them that were in authority in the days past, of their destruction, and of their overthrow . . . and this prophet of God lived to see their desolation come (which was sad to behold) and his prophecies were fulfilled in his own days."¹ The predictions of these two men claim careful and minute examination.

In Burroughs' works there is a piece bearing the title, "Good Council and Advice Rejected by Disobedient Men; and the Days of Oliver Cromwell's Visitation passed over; and also of Richard Cromwell, his Son, late Protectors of These Nations." This was published in 1659. It contains a reprint of several letters delivered to Oliver in 1657 and 1658 and to Richard in the latter year, bold and manly epistles, free from servility, the burden of which is the unjust sufferings of

¹ *Josiah Coates' Testimony*, prefixed to Burroughs' Works.

the Quakers. The great Protector is fearlessly arraigned as permitting persecution which he might stop with a word. The last letter to Oliver Cromwell was "given into his hands at Hampton Court, in the sixth month 1658, about a month before his death." This letter contains the prophecy, "but if thou continuest in thy oppression the Lord will suddenly smite thee." In a subsequent letter to Richard, after his father's death, Oliver is accused of neglecting his duty, "and, therefore, he was smitten of the Lord and suddenly taken away in judgment." Well. No doubt the death of the great Protector at the comparatively early age of fifty-nine appeared to come quite suddenly to those who saw how indispensable he was to the stability of the Commonwealth. But Oliver's health had been failing for years; and he was worn out with labours, anxieties, and sorrows. Enemies may accept the view that he was smitten of the Lord: friends may hold that he was taken away from the evil to come. The facts are before us, and whether Edward Burroughs' words are to be taken as a clear prediction of a foreseen event, or a threat inspired by a sense of injustice, which happened to meet with the semblance of fulfilment, must be left for each reader to form his own opinion.

Two days before Oliver Cromwell's death, Edward Burroughs sent a letter to the wife and children, who were anxiously watching the dying bed, reiterating his former demand, "let the persecution of the Quakers cease," and plainly threatening them with destruction in case of disobedience. That the Protectorate was set aside in a few months we know; but are we compelled to believe that Burroughs foresaw and foretold

the event, by divine inspiration? Mere human sagacity might have hazarded the conjecture without great presumption, but there is no necessity to impute such conjecture to the Quaker prophet. His denunciation may be fully accounted for by his immutable conviction of the righteousness of his demand, and his faith that God would surely punish unjust and cruel governments.

George Fox the younger, printed a paper predicting "breach upon breach, insurrection upon insurrection, overturning upon overturning, heaps upon heaps, division upon division,"¹ in such phrases foretelling the approaching end of the existing powers, the Parliament and their army. A copy of this paper was given to each member of Parliament before General Monk entered London with his troops. A few months later this paper was reprinted "that people may see that the Lord hath fulfilled already many of the words which he gave unto his servant and prophet to declare unto them, and that they may see that there hath been a true prophet's message among them, and that people may take heed that they slight not the Lord's prophets, as they did whom he hath now broken." This is the most explicit assertion of fulfilled prediction that we have met with. No doubt it was made in good faith, and in the expectation that it would be generally recognised. Yet in those troublous times after the death of Oliver and resignation of Richard, vague utterances such as we have transcribed might seem rather a description of the present than a prediction of the future. However, George Fox the younger, thought

¹ *Writings of George Fox the younger*, 1662, page 193.

that he had foretold the overthrow of the Parliament's power, and Monk overthrew it; so much may be safely said.

More remarkable is the prediction of the great Plague, and the Fire of London. The plague raged in 1665, the fire destroyed the city in 1666; the alleged prediction is found in a publication entitled "England's sad Estate and Condition lamented, &c," which was printed the 15th of the second month, 1661, shortly before its author's death. It has already been noted that although, in the view of the Quakers, the downfall of the Presbyterians and Cromwellians was a judgment upon them for their persecution of the Children of Light, the restoration of the monarchy brought no permanent relief. The respite they enjoyed lasted only a few months, until the insurrection of Venner and the Fifth-monarchy men led to a persecution fiercer than any that had preceded: and with the persecution came a renewal of the prophecies. The younger Fox's remarkable prediction reads as follows:—
 "Oh! England, England! A day of sorrow and calamity is coming upon many of thy inhabitants. I have long been sensible of it; even a day of such *Breaking, Confusion, and Judgment*, as hath not been for a long space. . . . Oh! England, England! I have oft heard and treasured up what the Lord hath said in me concerning thy Inhabitants: but now must I declare in the appointed season. Thus hath the Lord spoken in me for a long time concerning thy Inhabitants, saying, *The people are too many; the people are TOO MANY: I will THIN THEM. I will THIN THEM.* [Mark] that is, *He will make them FEWER,*

for they cumber the ground. And the spirit of the Lord hath oft signified unto me for a long time, That an *OVERFLOWING SCOURGE*, yea, even an *exceeding GREAT and TERRIBLE JUDGMENT* is to come upon thee, O Land, and that many in thee shall fall and be taken away in the Judgment; and the Spirit of the Lord signifieth unto me, that the *time draweth nigh.*"¹ Truly a remarkable prophecy, nor can we be surprised that four years after, in the awful days of the pestilence, those who had read it before, took it down from the book-shelf and gazed at the words while the death-cart went about the streets, and the dreadful cry, "Bring out your dead" rang in their ears; and thought that they witnessed its unmistakable fulfilment.

Sewel, in his history, relates other predictions of the great fire. Years before, Thomas Briggs passing through the streets of London, preached repentance to the inhabitants, and coming through Cheapside he cried out that unless London repented as Nineveh did, God would destroy it. Thomas Ibbett of Huntingdonshire came to London a few days before the burning of the city, and unbuttoning his clothes, so as to look as if he had put them on hastily on getting out of bed, he went about the city pronouncing a judgment by fire which should lay it waste. Strange to say, the immediate fulfilment of his prediction seems to have driven him distracted. He took his stand at the east end of Cheapside, and spread his arms forth, as if to stay the progress of the flames, and had not some friends forced him away, he might have perished by the fire. So the story is told, but the historian cites no authorities, and we cannot

¹ *Ibid*, pages 219-221.

examine the original sources, as in the cases of Burroughs and George Fox the younger.

Having drawn attention to those historical predictions which were regarded as fulfilled, it is a duty to point out one which, on the contrary, failed of fulfilment. This same George Fox the younger, from the prison in which he shortly after expired, addressed a remarkable letter to King Charles the Second. With the fearlessness of an Elijah, the Quaker prophet rebukes the ungodly King, and in that respect the epistle commands our admiration. The purely predictive portion of it runs thus:—"Certainly it had been better for thee if thou hadst never come, for I have seen it tending to thy destruction. And when I have seen the abomination and the cruelties which are committed and intended, there hath a pity arose in me towards thee for thy soul's sake: and it hath been my desire, if it might stand with the will of God, that he would put it into thy heart to go out of the land again, that so thy life might be preserved, and that thou mightest have time to repent. . . . when the Lord appears against thee thou must fall; verily there is a great desolation near, thy hand cannot stay it. . . . O what shall I say that might be for thy safety! Verily I can say little; the Lord's decree must stand; the Lord is highly displeased, and his wrath is near to be revealed, and he is swift in his goings, and he will shorten the days of his enemies for his elects' sake. O that thy soul might be saved in the day of the Lord!"¹ Now what must be said of this? If within the next few months or years,

¹ *Writings of George Fox the younger*, Second edition 1665, page 260. First edition does not contain this.

there had been a bloody counter-revolution, if Charles II. had perished like his father on the scaffold, or died sword in hand on foughten field, events which despite Venner's failure seemed at that time by no means highly improbable—no doubt this letter would have been reprinted with an appendix pointing out how notably it had been fulfilled. Seeing that Charles reigned for twenty-five years after the prophecy, and died peacefully in his bed, one cannot but conclude that the prophet's anticipation of the King's death was not infallibly inspired.

One class of quaker prophecies remains for consideration. The primitive Quakers regarded their society as the only true Church of Christ, and accordingly expected its ultimate universal triumph. As narrated in a previous chapter, Howgill, in the darkest hour of their persecutions, had it revealed to him that "the memorial of this nation which is holy unto me shall never be rooted out, but shall live to all ages as a cloud of witnesses in generations to come." In reply to those who gleefully anticipated the speedy extinction of the quaker heresy, Burroughs exclaims, "O ye fools and blind . . . I tell you, nay; we shall not fall nor be decreased, nor come to naught; but the Truth shall stand for ever, and we shall be the renowned people of the whole earth. . . . And, ye fools and blind, it's you that will fall and come to nothing, and not we whom the Lord is bringing up out of the apostacy, which you all are." Poor Burroughs. If he could return to London now, if he could survey the state of quakerism in England and throughout the world, what would be his feelings? George Fox, too, though we recall no prediction so precise as this of his

follower, fully expected the general triumph of his principles. It is not for us to say that in the long run all Christendom will not be converted to the views of the Children of Light. It may be so. But their present condition sadly contrasts with these confident expectations.

Must we, on account of this manifest failure, write down the Quakers as false prophets? That were hard measure. Fallible we must pronounce them; too absolute in their identification of their own conceptions with the perfect truth of God, an error into which all are prone to fall. But false prophets? No. "The Truth shall stand for ever:" this was the essence and spirit of their prophecy. Their particular predictions of future events do not compel us to attribute to them a miraculous foresight of things to come. But the prophecy which springs from faith in God, which exultingly foresees and foretells the final triumph of truth and righteousness and love—this was in their hearts and in their mouths abundantly—and this prophecy cannot fail.

CHAPTER IX.

SCHISMS AND DISCIPLINE.

THE facts narrated in previous chapters suffice to show that rarely has discipline been more needed, and its prospects have seldom looked less hopeful, than among the Quakers between the years 1650 and 1660. Himself owning no spiritual authority but that of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, George Fox had gathered a band of enthusiasts who followed him, not as disciples a master, but as free-lances a captain whom they obeyed just so far and so long as they felt themselves constrained by internal impulse. Any one of them thinking himself moved by the Spirit might at any moment diverge to any point of the compass and undertake any extravagant enterprise. In that period of intense excitement, they rushed to the assault upon the existing churches as each saw his opportunity, without order and without concert. The converts whom they gathered, were emphatically enjoined not to look to any man as their teacher, but to God alone. Many of these converts had previously rebelled against every religious authority and run into wild excesses of licence, from which Fox reclaimed them to submit to the restraints of Christian morality. This was his highest honour; yet it is evident that the reception of such converts into the quaker

community involved a serious peril. Some of these old Ranters were but superficially impressed, and soon brought trouble and reproach upon the Children of Light. Discipline became an imperative necessity.

It is not to be supposed that during the first ten or twelve years of quakerism there was absolutely no discipline among them, although during this period it was not formally developed into a system. Quite early in the story we read of schisms, and schisms imply a pre-existing unity. How among individual believers owning no authority in religion except the indwelling Spirit, and extremely jealous of human dictation, a cohesion of doctrine and practice could be secured may appear to require explanation; but if so, it is not far to seek. These Children of the Light not only professed to be, but actually were, in some good degree, guided and ruled by the Spirit of Christ, and that spirit is the spirit of love. They were, like the primitive Church, taught of God to love one another, so that George Fox's re-iterated precept, "Keep your meetings: Keep your meetings," was to them no external dictation of the man George Fox, but a voice of the Spirit which echoed in themselves also. These meetings, held on Sundays and other days in private houses, were in part guarded against the intrusion of the faint-hearted, the selfish, the worldly, by the fierce storms of persecution which howled around them constantly, and often burst in and broke them up by violence. Thus persecution without and brotherly-love within, with a more than ordinarily firm hold on the practical morality of the Christian life, combined to protect these little bands of believers from dissension and misconduct. Their chief

danger was the liability to mistake their own fervid imaginations for the impulses of the Spirit; and it was just this weak side which they hardly dared to fortify by precautions, lest they should be guilty of the sin of limiting or resisting the Spirit of God.

The first breach in their harmony was occasioned by this neglect, and Fox's record in his *Journal* shows how deeply he was troubled thereby. "About this time (1653) I was in a fast for about ten days, my spirit being greatly exercised on truth's behalf: for James Milner and Richard Myer went out into imaginations, and a company followed them. This James Milner, and some of his company, had true openings at the first: but getting up into pride and exaltation of spirit, they ran out from truth. I was sent for to them, and was moved of the Lord to go, and show them their goings forth: and they came to see their folly and condemned it, and came into the way of truth again."¹ Richard Myer appeared in the last chapter as the subject of a miraculous cure. We find James Milner associated with Fox, Nayler, Hubberthorn, and others in the Westmoreland petition to Parliament for the suppression of the quaker heresy. This document specifies the charges against Milner: "James Milner professeth himself to be God and Christ, and gives out prophecies: (1) that the day of judgment shall be the 15th November; (2) that there shall never judge sit at Lancaster again; (3) that he must ere long shrike the foundations of the great synagogue, meaning the Parliament."² Allowing for some misunderstanding of quaker language on the

¹ *Journal*, I, 198.

² George Fox's *Works*, Vol. III., p. 588.

part of the Westmoreland clergy, one can, through their spectacles, see this Quaker prophet, excited to frenzy by obloquy and ill-usage, standing at bay before his judges, and pouring out a flood of mingled doctrine and prediction, of which we have a reminiscence here. Prophet Milner, though on that occasion partially disowned by Fox, appears to have continued his predictions in some quaker meeting, until the authority and arguments of George Fox recalled him and his followers to a saner mind. In some respects this brief local disturbance foreshadowed the much more serious schism in connection with James Nayler, which has already been narrated. In subsequent cases it was the occurrence of schism which led to the establishment of discipline; and it may be that the meetings which were settled in the north of England in 1653, had their origin in the trouble caused by prophets Myer and Milner.

At what time the Quakers began to keep a register of members I have not ascertained. Regular attendance at meetings was held a sufficient sign of membership, there being no celebration of sacraments to mark out believers from the world. Any one walking inconsistently was disowned, as we see in the case of one Christopher Atkins of Norwich, "who brought dishonour upon the blessed truth and name of the Lord." He was "judged and denied by friends; and afterwards he gave forth a paper of condemnation of his sin and evil."¹ This is an instance of the well-considered prudence which shines in quaker church business. A repentant sinner, desiring to be received back into fellowship, must himself acknowledge and condemn his sin in writing. Thus the

¹ *Journal*, I. 260.

purity of their fellowship was maintained by the expulsion of offenders, instead of by scrutiny upon entrance. Ministers were recognised from an early date, as is shown in the Journal: but, even when so many as sixty went forth from the north in 1654, there is not a word about their selection by George Fox, or by the congregation: their mission is attributed to the Lord moving upon their spirits, and to that alone. Still there must have been mutual consultation before they could divide the land amongst them, and go forth two and two to defined fields of labour; and at this time, or soon after, collections were made to provide necessaries for the poorer ministers; all of which argues a measure of human forethought and guidance. Judge Fell's house at Swartmore was the head-quarters where the funds were kept, and the business correspondence carried on. In all these arrangements the respect and love with which Fox was regarded, secured for him great influence. The author of "*The Inner Life of the Sects of the Commonwealth*" is disposed to see in George Fox a seventeenth century Wesley, appointing and recalling preachers as he thought fit. No doubt Fox's personal influence was great, but he seems to have exercised it sparingly. The leading preachers freely remonstrated with him, particularly objecting to the women-preachers. Edward Burroughs wrote once and again, complaining that some of the preachers made the truth to be evil spoken of. In 1656 he sent back a young woman with this pithy epistle, "This little short maid that comes to thee, she has been this long while abroad, and in her there is little or no service as in the ministry. It were well to be laid on her to be a servant somewhere. That

is more her place. I leave it to thee. Friends where she has been have been burdened by her." Doubtless Fox would, after this, employ his influence to persuade the little short maid to refrain from preaching for awhile and wait in silence upon the Lord, nor is it likely that he would be unsuccessful, especially if the little maid was dependent for travelling expenses upon the Swarthmore fund. I do not see in the quotations given from this correspondence that George Fox exercised anything like a dictatorship among the ministers.¹

The first Yearly Meeting was held in Bedfordshire in 1657 or 1658: "a general yearly meeting for the whole nation," to which many Friends from most parts of the country came, so that the inns, and towns round about, were filled. The meeting lasted three days and was attended by thousands. "And although there was some disturbance by some rude people that had run out from truth, yet the Lord's power came over all, and a glorious meeting it was." So far as it appears, this meeting was a gathering of Friends for the sake of unity, and for prayer and exhortation. But the next mention of a Yearly Meeting tells of a meeting attended by men only, which was of a business character. Its objects were, in the first place, to secure for the poor Friends who were suffering persecution, the advice of those who had been justices and magistrates, and who understood something of the law; and also to record their sufferings that they might be laid before the justices, judges, or parliament. Hence the quaint name, "Meeting for Sufferings," still borne by an influential committee of the London Yearly Meeting. Besides this care for the persecuted, they

¹ Barclay's *Inner Life*, &c., p. 340, *et seq.*

made collections for the relief of the poor, took care that none should be chargeable to their parishes, sent help to Friends beyond the seas, and in other ways manifested the spirit of Christian charity.

These arrangements sufficed until after the Restoration. All over the country the weekly meetings for worship carried on their own discipline in an informal way ; except in the north, and perhaps some other places, where special meetings held quarterly or monthly for church business had been established. In 1659, Burroughs advised the establishment of such a meeting in London. The Yearly Meetings exhibited and maintained the unity of the whole body, and the more earnest and influential Friends who attended them would return to their homes, to watch over the local meetings and carry out the suggestions they had received in the great assembly. In the relentless persecution of all nonconformists after the Restoration, during which the Quakers suffered more severely than any others, George Fox was imprisoned for about five months in 1660, after which he was free, with the exception of a short imprisonment at Leicester, until 1663. In this year rumours of a plot in the north spurred on the magistrates to increased activity. Fox was seized at Swarthmoor. Being forewarned he could have avoided arrest, but he voluntarily submitted, fearing that if they failed to capture him, the persecutors would vent their rage upon less conspicuous Friends. Refusing to make the oath of allegiance and supremacy, he underwent nearly three years of cruel confinement. In Lancaster Castle Colonel Kirby gave order to the jailer to keep him close, and suffer no flesh alive to come at him, as one unfit to be

discoursed with by men. Here he was put into a room in the tower, which was filled with smoke from fires in the lower rooms, so that poor Fox was almost stifled. The rain beat in upon his bed, and he had to rise and stop the aperture as well as he could, high winds often making his labour vain. "In this manner did I lie all that long cold winter till the next assize; in which time I was so starved with cold and rain, that my body was greatly swelled, and my limbs much benumbed."¹ After the assizes he was removed to Scarborough, being then so weak that he could hardly sit on horseback. Here his sufferings were, if possible, worse than before; and it seemed to him that his foes aimed at his death. Shut up in that grim fortress, almost surrounded by the sea, wet and cold, and half-starved, denied the society of friends, the sport of the rough soldiers and gazing-stock of gay visitors, he bore his miseries with unshaken fortitude. Here it was that the very soldiers who had mocked his sufferings, changed to a great respect for the indomitable man, saying that he was "stiff as a tree, and as pure as a bell."² Just one day before the great fire of London the royal order came down, which released him after nearly three years of cruel imprisonment. Emerging from his isolation Fox found that during his absence the quaker societies had been greatly distracted by a new heresy, and it was this which led to the establishment of a firm system of discipline throughout the whole quaker church. Fox regarded his labours in this cause as a sacred and distinct mission, imposed upon him by the same heavenly power which had sent him forth before to preach the everlasting gospel. His

¹ *Journal*, II. 55.² *Journal*, II. 70

first commission was to gather the church, his second was to regulate it. In both he had an equal assurance of the divine guidance.

With all our respect for the Quakers and their great leader, it is difficult to repress a smile when one hears that the occasion of ten years or more of bitter strife among them was nothing more than the question whether or not the head should be uncovered in prayer. The Quakers were the victims of their own virtues. If we have to select one excellent quality as pre-eminently a quaker virtue, it must be conscientiousness. With them everything, small and great, was matter of conscience, and conscience once having pronounced its decision, they would be torn to pieces before they would disobey it: but not content with personal fidelity to conviction, they would shake and overturn all existing customs of society, and endanger the existence of their own church rather than tolerate a difference of opinion. This "hat-honour" had been discerned to be wrong, a mere flattery of the rich and great. George Fox was forbidden by the Lord to put off his hat to any, high or low, and was required to "Thee and Thou" all men and women, without any respect to rich or poor, great or small, nor was he to bid people good morrow or good evening, nor to bow or serve with his leg to any one.¹ What George Fox received as a divine command, his followers received also. Children refused the customary tokens of respect to parents, and clowns to magistrates and kings. That the consequences appeared to be evil was nothing to George Fox. Prejudice was excited against his mission: passionate tempers burst out into

¹ *Journal*, I, 103.

unseemly exhibitions of rage, often leading to cruel usage of those who provoked it. All this was nothing to George Fox; truth was truth, and must be followed despite all consequences. And now he saw this very quality which had enabled him and his disciples to triumph over all outward opposition, rending his church in twain and filling the believers with grief and dismay. A polemical tract called "*The Spirit of the Hat*,"¹ reveals the humours of the controversy. Fox had seen that he must not uncover his head as a sign of respect to man: some would-be logical Quakers deduced the conclusion that it was absurd to uncover the head as a sign of respect before God. Fox said to them, "You give no more reverence to God than to a horse." They replied: "You would not uncover before men, because you denied that was true honour. You did not deny that kings and magistrates should be honoured, but you said, taking off the hat was not true honour. Is that honour to be given to God which you declared to be worthless when refused to men?" Great was the outcry against tyranny; loud was the demand for Christian liberty to obey the dictates of the Spirit, and to be free from human ordinances. Fox and the other leaders were accused of setting themselves above their brethren, and of assuming authority to bind and loose in the Church. For years an acrimonious controversy raged in the meetings. Those who did not uncover were called the Hatters or Hatmen. The two parties were so bitterly opposed, that, according to this pamphlet, intermarriages between those holding contrary opinions were discouraged, and even burial in

¹ In the British Museum Library, marked *MS. F. 2. 1* London, 1673.

the Quaker cemeteries was refused to Hatmen. They were all stiff as trees, they were all scornors of consequences. The Hatmen would not comply with ancient prejudice nor yield to human dictation. The uncoverers would not tolerate a breach of the unity of the Church. The true Spirit was one, and could not impel to antagonistic courses. This separatist practice must spring from a dark, earthly, nay devilish spirit. So the sad strife was prolonged for years, and the peace of the Church, and perhaps its very life, its power to grow, were sacrificed, because neither party could yield in regard to a matter of no intrinsic importance. The Jew prays with covered head, the Christian with uncovered, but not on this account is the one more, the other less pleasing to Him, who is worshipped in spirit and in truth.

John Perrot (ring-leader of the Hatters) joined the Quakers not long after their origin. With zeal and self-devotion, which would have obtained for him high honour in Quaker annals but for his subsequent heresy, Perrot and another, named Luff or Love, started for Italy to proclaim the gospel. They visited Leghorn and Venice, and reached Rome, where they were arrested. Love died in prison: some said he was put to death. Perrot was confined in a lunatic hospital: a fact which was remembered against him, after he had become a schismatic, and some Italian letters written by him when in Italy, were produced as proof of his insanity. Towards the close of the Commonwealth period, efforts to procure his release were successful, and he returned to England, to be welcomed with open arms as one who had suffered much for the gospel. He made a great impression as a

man of singular sanctity and spirituality ; and his novel doctrine that it was a superstition to remove the hat during prayer—it seems that it was the quaker custom to sit with the hat on in the meeting, except during audible prayer—was accepted as more suitable to a spiritual dispensation. Thomas Ellwood and others were captivated by it. When George Fox reappeared in the assemblies, he threw himself with all the vehemence of his strong character against this indecent innovation. A solemn meeting was appointed in London for a travail in spirit on behalf of the heretics, which was held day after day for several days. Some of Perrot's party, among whom was Ellwood, confessed their fault, tore up their controversial papers, and were received into the unity of the body again, with great gladness of heart. Others in distant parts of the country sent letters of submission, and even from across the seas similar communications were received. Thus the conservative party triumphed, and in Fox's view, "the Lord's power was wonderfully manifested, and came over all."¹ It was not quite all, for Perrot and a faction still stood out, and there was a party of Hatters for several years. Perrot in course of time went to America, and there, it was said, left the quaker body, and fell into bad ways, after which his party dwindled and disappeared.

The Hat-men having been reclaimed or disowned, Fox set about the great work of bringing the whole Church within one strict discipline. "Then was I moved of the Lord to recommend the setting-up of five monthly meetings of men and women in the City of London (besides the women's meetings and the quarterly meetings)

¹ *Journal*, II. 77.

to take care of God's glory, and to admonish and exhort such as walked disorderly or carelessly, and not according to truth; for whereas friends had had only quarterly meetings; now truth was spread, and friends were grown more numerous, I was moved to recommend the setting-up of monthly meetings throughout the nation."¹ According to this, the quarterly meetings already existed, while a later record represents the quarterly meetings also as the creation of this time. The women's meetings here recognized as already at work, are afterwards ascribed to a still later period than the monthly meetings. Probably the truth is there were both women's and quarterly meetings previously, in London and a few other places, but that they were for the first time established systematically throughout the whole country after Perrot had shown the necessity for a stricter discipline. These details, however, are unimportant: the great fact was that now the meetings for discipline were charged "to take care of God's glory." Formerly, as we have seen, they were to take care of the poor, the persecuted, and their brethren beyond seas. At that time, I suppose, it was not recognised that they had to take care of the glory of God. Did not He rule in His Church, by His Spirit dwelling in the heart of every believer? Would not He take good care of His own glory? What need was there for them to interfere? Nay, would not such interference be a presumptuous limiting of the Spirit of God? In those days, William Sympson was allowed to parade the country in his indecent manner, for three years, and no one interfered for God's glory. But now the Church realised its responsibility for the whole be-

¹ *Journal*, II, 77.

haviour of every one of its members. No disorderly conduct, no careless walking, was to pass unproved. Month by month there must be strict scrutiny; and to secure its thoroughness, there were separate meetings for men and women, in which matters could be handled which were unfit for a mixed assembly. The duty of mutual watchfulness was enjoined, and the whole moral influence of the entire community was brought to bear upon each individual member. With a spirit of earnest piety pervailing the body, such a discipline must have been well-nigh irresistible; producing either complete external conformity to the standard of morality upheld by the body, or driving the recalcitrant members from the communion.

Schism introduced discipline, but the discipline became a standing occasion of schism. On its first promulgation it was met with strong opposition in some places, and although it was successfully established throughout the land, and wherever quakerism existed, the remainder of Fox's life was one long battle for its maintenance. Throwing his whole energy into the work, he bore down opposition by the persistent assertion that these arrangements were the result of divine inspiration. These were not plans of human wisdom, methods of expediency, rules voluntarily agreed to, proposed, seconded, and carried by a majority of votes. Such a notion as determining a matter by voting was undreamt of in a quaker assembly. Fox declared with assured confidence, it was "the power of God, in which the order is established; and the eternal Spirit and Light, in which the men's and women's meetings were set up."¹ This view was

¹ *Epistle*, ccxvii.

generally accepted. We are not for a moment to suppose that Fox was a Mohammed receiving revelations from heaven which a credulous following accepted as such on his bare assertion. The quaker belief was, that all true believers have the spirit of God, and all who are guided by the spirit of God are, so far, infallible. Hence it was that Fox could boldly appeal to them for confirmation of the divine authority of this discipline: "All you that be gathered in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ, ye know that all your meetings for worship of God, and all your quarterly meetings, and all your monthly meetings, and all your women's meetings, and all your yearly meetings are set up by the power and spirit of the Lord God, and witnessed by His spirit and power in your hearts."¹ Those who did not cry Amen to this, but resisted the establishment of this system of church-government were ruthlessly branded as actuated by the evil spirit. "Now, friends, whosoever shall come, under what pretence soever, to alter these meetings, or to deny and speak against the men's and women's meetings, it is the spirit of confusion and opposition, which would be seeming to do something; yet its work is to disquiet the simple minds, and it is the very same spirit with John Perrot's. Mark his end."²

Yet there were among the Friends some who sturdily braved Fox's denunciation. When they inquired of the Lord, no internal voice of the Spirit confirmed in them the divine authority of the novel arrangements; which on the contrary seemed to them to savour of human wit and will. The women's meetings were a great

¹ *Journal*, II. p. 360.

² *Epistle*, cccxvii.

stumbling-block. Women preachers, though not altogether popular, were tolerated, because it was not for man to determine through whom the Spirit might please to convey his message: besides for them there was Scripture precedent. But for women's separate meetings there was no precedent, and the innovation seemed to be a breach in the indivisible unity of the Church. Selected for attack as the obviously vulnerable place in the system, the women's meetings were not the sole reason for opposing the discipline. The root of the objection went much deeper, and was at bottom an instinctive alarm lest individual liberty should be overborne by the authority of a few great names, or the weight of mere numbers. In the beginning, it was said, there were no such meetings, no such discipline, yet had they not lived together in peace and unity? Moreover, was it not their fundamental principle that every one ought to be guided by the Spirit within, and not to be governed by man-made rules? An outcry was raised against judging and "prescriptions." No one, it was said, and the appeal to the Apostle Paul is obvious, had a right to judge his brother, or to prescribe to his brother how he should act. These claims for individual liberty, Fox encountered with assertions of Church authority which even Rome itself could not surpass. "The saints in the power and spirit of God had and have power to judge of words and manners, of lives and conversations: they can discern and distinguish who serves God and Christ, and who serves Him not; and so can put a distinction between the profane and the holy."¹ And he who had been the most intolerant of forms, be-

¹ *Journal*, II. p. 263.

came himself a pleader for forms. "When they are thus gone forth from the light and the power and the spirit of God, they go out of all true forms, into confusion and emptiness, without form; then they say they will not be subject to forms, and cry down all forms with their darkness and a perverse spirit, and so mash all together. For there is a form of godliness, and a form of sound words."¹

The opposition in the north was led by two preachers, John Wilkinson and John Story, against whom nothing is alleged, except their resistance to the new arrangements. London and the west of England were disturbed by the controversy; which from about 1677 to 1682 was fiercely maintained in the majority of the meetings throughout the kingdom. William Rogers wrote a book called "*The Christian Quaker*," accusing George Fox and his followers of unfaithfulness to the truth. Rogers challenged a discussion in the London Yearly Meeting, and was promptly met by Ellwood and others. The debate continued from six o'clock in the morning until after mid-day, and if we are to accept Ellwood's account, Rogers retreated ignominiously. Throughout the long contest, the older preachers and the greater number of the Quakers adhered to Fox and the discipline. The dissentients established separate meetings, which continued until after Fox's death. In the end, the Quaker historian Sewel says, the separatists "decayed and vanished as snow in the fields." Like George Fox, he saw in the disappearance of the schismatics a proof of the divine displeasure. It is, however, not unreasonable to suppose that the crushing

¹ *Epistle*, cclxxi.

out of individual liberty helped to cause the stagnation which fell upon quakerism in the eighteenth century. Discipline triumphed, and its bonds were wound tightly round the community. Uniformity, decency, quietude, were secured ; but was it not at the expense of life ?

Amid the strife of controversy, and the bitterness of schisms, we look in vain for the ideal Christian Church. That unhappy delusion of infallibility marred the quaker movement from its outset. George Fox never learned the full truth of toleration. He perceived plainly enough the folly and crime of religious persecution ; but he did not see the mistake and the mischief of that mental intolerance which resents difference of opinion as a sin, and cannot recognise an identical spiritual life under a diversity of forms. This blemish dwarfed and deformed his society from its birth, and shrivelled into a soon withered sect, that which should have blossomed and expanded into the re-union and revivification of Christendom. Nevertheless in spite of this sad failure, a loving eye can discern the lineaments of the ideal, gleaming through these unhappy obscurations. The Quaker Church was at first truly Catholic. In England, Scotland, Ireland, in the plantations beyond the seas, and among the continental nations, it was one Church, one family, undivided, animated by one spirit, and only too closely uniform in belief and observances. The narrowness of national and denominational churchism was unknown in its assemblies. The Quakers not only believed but realised that in the Church of Christ distinctions of nation and race disappear. In the first fervour of spiritual life they looked forward confidently to the regeneration of the whole world through their mission. When this enthusiasm

died away they mitigated sectarian narrowness by the development of that tolerant spirit to which their founder did not attain. Having no longer a mission to the world they avoided controversy, and cultivated their own spiritual life in meekness and retiredness. But the cultivation was not individual only ; it was social. This quiet, patient, persevering, and loving care for the spiritual life of all its members, is the chief beauty of the Quaker Church. In their lowest state of declension, there was a sense of truth and righteousness among them which could not endure that the Church of Christ should be defiled by moral impurity. Delivered from the false and embarrassing distinction of clergy and laity, they present the instructive spectacle of a religious order without rules, yet better governed by the Spirit, than monastic orders by the rules of St. Francis or St. Benedict ; of a religious community, not locally isolated from the world, but, while abiding in all the natural, divinely-appointed relations of family, social, and political life, yet separated in spirit, not less successfully than fraternities dwelling in the desert, or cooped within stone walls. Not that they were at all times and altogether successful in excluding the worldly spirit. Far from it. At times it seemed as if love of money, of ease, of pleasure, would extinguish the last spark of the Divine life. This extinction was averted by Divine grace, and the Quaker Church has been preserved to this day to suggest to eyes that can see, although they themselves are perhaps not among those who can discern it, an ideal of a Church which shall combine perfect catholicity with perfect individual liberty, and perfect mutual care and responsibility, a Church in which the

bond of union shall not be intellectual but spiritual, not exact agreement in dogma, but the possession of a spiritual life, which abhors and instinctively rejects the selfish and the impure ; the very life of Christ produced in His own by the one Spirit of God.

CHAPTER X.

THE QUAKERS AS THEY APPEARED TO THEIR OPPONENTS.

"To write the history of a religion," says Renan,¹ "one ought first to have believed in it (without which it would not be possible to understand by what means it fascinated and satisfied the conscience of man); and then one should have ceased to believe it in an unqualified manner, for absolute faith is incompatible with sincere history." If this be so, then the true religion, supposing such to exist, is the only religion which can never have a true history: its adherents being disqualified for the task by their faith, and apostates by their disloyalty to truth. Even in the case of an imperfect religion, which Renan holds, one can love after having ceased to believe, the revulsion of feeling produced by the painful discovery that the religion is not credible will more than counterbalance the advantage of the intimate knowledge supplied by the previous belief. In studying *any religion* and its adherents to the *point* which is suitable in *historical* and *physical* science is impossible, and *impracticable* and *impossible*. Man is necessarily interested in this subject, and cannot divest himself of this immense personal interest. We must accept the fact, and seriously recognising our liability to be unconsci-

¹ *Essai sur l'origine du christianisme*. Introduction, page 21.

ously influenced by our desires and fears, endeavour to guard against it by precautions ; amongst which, in the study of a particular form of religion, to give a fair hearing to its antagonists is one of the most obvious.

In the newsprints of the Commonwealth, such as the *Weekly Post*, and a low comic periodical called *Mercurius Fumigosus, or the Smoking Nocturnall*, quakerism is described as a compound of pantheism and licentiousness. Tracts and pamphlets of the period which have escaped the dust-bin they merited, catch-pennies printed to suit the taste of a coarse and credulous age, full of absurd fictions, disgusting orgies, and Satanic apparitions, remain to testify to the notoriety of the sect, and the popular demand for information about it. If the sound morality of the Quakers were not fully established by direct evidence, these scurrilous attacks would be worthless as evidence to the contrary. Possibly during the intense excitement attending its first promulgation, when as yet the need for discrimination and discipline among the converts was not fully realised, unworthy characters may have crept into the Quaker Church, whose misconduct gave some occasion to the scandalous reports alluded to in the *Fanatick History*, a publication of the Restoration, which, like Butler's *Hudibras*, manifests the re-action against the extremes of Puritanism. However this be, the high morality of the Friends of truth is unimpeachable, and can afford to ignore calumnious tales. Even from some of these publications which relied for their sale upon the popular dislike of the sect, involuntary evidence in the Quakers' favour can be extracted. The *Yea and Nay Almanack*, a stupid and ribald jest-book, which afforded entertainment

to pot-house frequenters in Charles the Second's reign, insinuates that many tradesmen joined the Quakers because their practice of sticking to one price in a bargain was found a sure bait to catch fools, and attributes the increase of their numbers to the desire of the poor to share in the benevolence of the wealthier members of the society. With thanks for this unintended testimony to the conspicuous honesty and liberality of the early Friends, we gladly turn away from the inspection of such nauseous literature.

Ten years after that outburst in Nottingham church, hardly any one in England can have been altogether ignorant of the existence of George Fox and his followers; and an immense number must have heard their voices in the churches and streets; have seen them hustled by mobs and haled to prison by constables. But, as always happens, contemporaries were unable to estimate aright the comparative importance of the events of the time, and, with the exception of religious controversialists, nobody thought it worth his while to inform himself accurately about this sect everywhere spoken against, and to record his observations for the benefit of posterity. Passing allusions here and there illustrate the merely superficial knowledge of them which was possessed by intelligent men of that time. Dr. Thomas Fuller, having finished that book of his Church history which recounts the persecutions of the reign of bloody Mary, laying aside his pen to bethink himself of some topic to dilate upon in its dedication to Baron Brooke, remembers the ignorant and clownish fanatics who, in his own generation, were notorious for the steadfastness with which they had endured sufferings for conscience sake: but the tales

he has heard of William Sympson and others, and of Quakers refusing customary tokens of respect to nobles and magistrates, call forth, instead of pity and admiration, a hope of their speedy suppression. That staunch loyalist and pious churchman, John Evelyn, visiting through curiosity some of these poor wretches confined in Ipswich gaol, can see in them only fanatics of dangerous principles, a melancholy proud sort of people and exceedingly ignorant.¹ His friend Pepys, not a bad sort of man as the world goes, but fond of money, and the reverse of puritanical in his moral code, shows a much kinder spirit. He jots down in his diary on August 7, 1664, "I saw several poor creatures carried by, by constables, for being at conventicles. They go like lambs without any resistance. I would to God they would either conform, or be more wise, and not be catched!" Two years later his relative, Thomas Pepys, "did come to me to consult about the business of being a justice of the peace, which he is much against, and among other reasons, tells me that he is not free to exercise punishment according to the Act against Quakers and other people for religion." The attempt to coerce consciences then, as always, produced a natural reaction in favour of the persecuted. Bishop Burnet in his History of his own time, describes the extraordinary firmness of the Quakers when the rigorous execution of the Act drove all other dissenters into concealment. "The behaviour of the Quakers was more particular, and had in it something that looked bold. They met at the same place, and the same hour as before. And when they were seized none of them would go out of the way: they went altogether

¹ *Diary*, Vol. I., page 315.

to prison: they stayed there till they were dismissed, for they would not pay their fines set on them, nor so much as the jail fees. And as soon as they were let out, they went to their meeting houses again; and when they found these were shut up by order, they held their meetings in the streets before the doors of these houses. They said they would not disown or be ashamed of their meeting together to worship God, but in imitation of Daniel, they would do it the more publicly, because they were forbidden the doing it."¹ Burnet perhaps had not heard that in Bristol and Reading, when the fathers and mothers were all in prison, the children, whose youth protected them from arrest, stood in their parents' places, holding their meetings in the streets, despite of jeers and cuffs from mobs and magistrates. Burnet acknowledges that the perverseness, as he calls it, of the Quakers outwore the government.

One misconception about the Quakers was swallowed greedily. Ultra-Protestants as they were, to whom Lutheranism and Calvinism seemed but a half-way stage from Rome, they were pertinaciously described as Papists in disguise. Prynne discovered this in 1651, and rushed to the press with "*The Quakers Unmasked, and clearly detected to be but the Spawn of Romish Frogs, Jesuites, and Franciscan Friars: sent from Rome to seduce the degenerated, Giddy-headed English Nation.*" On the mere flimsy evidence of a Bristol ironmonger he asserts that 120 Franciscan friars had been preaching in London under the disguise of Quakers, and that the same or other two shortly after appeared in Bristol. Prynne firmly believed that the chief speakers and rulers among

¹ *History*, Vol. I, page 471.

all the dissenting congregations, and particularly among the Quakers, were Romish emissaries, which is enough to convict him of credulity, even had he not solemnly recorded it as a matter of fact that the Quakers used enchanted potions, bracelets, and ribbons to intoxicate novices and draw them into their fellowship. Yet this absurd allegation of a popish origin was widely credited down to the end of the century. In "the Quaker and the Papist parallel'd"¹ twenty agreements are produced; the denial of the supremacy of Scripture, and assumption of infallibility occupying the forefront. "Foxes and Firebrands" asserts that the Jesuits acknowledged having spent twenty years in hammering out the sect of the Quakers; the design being to ruin the Protestant religion by the promotion of sectarianism, and so to pave the way for the return of popery. William Penn, on account of his intimacy with James II., was strongly suspected of being himself a Papist,² and even some of the Quakers appear to have doubted him.

Prynne, Fuller, Burnet and the others knew nothing at first hand about quakerism. They merely reflected the popular prejudice, which they strengthened without trying to understand the people whom they calumniated. But on the whole, whatever cause the Quakers had for just complaint, they could not reasonably complain of inattention. A long succession of pious and learned men, churchmen and dissenters, encountered them in controversy, and for this purpose took considerable pains to master their doctrine. Their verdict was decidedly unfavourable. The epithets showered upon it

¹ Anonymous. London, 1674. (In British Museum.)

² *Burnet's History*, III. 132, note.

and its professors are of the most lurid description :—damnable heresy, horrid blasphemies, Satanical depths, diabolical delusions, condemned Pharisees, odious hypocrites, masked devils, and such like. Nor can we wonder that in an age when orthodoxy was deemed an essential condition of salvation, quakerism was regarded as soul-destroying : for it was taken to be nothing less than blasphemous rejection of the true Jesus Christ, and setting up a false Christ in His room. In 1655 the vicar of St. Nicholas, Bristol, appeared against them in a book,¹ on the title page of which he wrote, that it was “by Ralph Farmer, a servant of that Jesus Christ that was crucified at Jerusalem over 1600 years ago ;” implying that the Quakers believed in another Christ. John Fallo, a thoughtful Congregational minister, who quotes abundantly from quaker writings, defines a Quaker thus : “I call him a Quaker that professes the Light within every man to be the only Lord, and very God.”² They preached, he says, “a Christ within, in opposition to and contempt of, a Christ without.” Quaker meetings were at first held’s us, generally “either silent, or taken up with the mad and violent irruptions of dismal howling and horrible roarings ! Persons suddenly taken up with the falling sickness, shaking and foaming at the mouth, and ~~some~~ lying flat on the ground as stark dead ! Some good things as these I have seen and heard ; and what these are undeniable testimonies of, are so manifest and notorious, that though you have now ~~heard~~ of, if not seen, the worst of them, you cannot deny that it was so !” The reply to Fox and

¹ *Answer to The Quaker Mission*, 1655.

² *Quakerism in Christendom*. London 1673.

³ *Ibid.*

Nayler's "Saul's Errand to Damascus" by one of the Westmoreland clergy also refers to physical phenomena resulting from the mental excitement of the meetings: "their practices do exceedingly savour of sorcerie; the quakings, swellings, roarings, foamings, (such as never we heard of, but such as were possessed of the devil) of persons at their meetings, and especially of little children, giving a sad suspicion of it; and the more by reason of the known suspicion upon George Fox, to deal with the devil, before ever he came to us in these parts!"¹ Deducting liberally for superstition and prejudice, there is probably a nucleus of fact here. But leaving anonymous and obscure authorities, let us summon a few witnesses of the highest character, to give their account of this quakerism which they so fiercely anathematized.

Recent Quaker writers have taken pains to show that in many of their doctrines and practices the Quakers were anticipated by the Baptists, the object being to prove that George Fox was not so original as has been supposed. However that be, the early Quakers had no stouter antagonists than these same Baptists, who should, if the theory be true, have understood them better than most. And among the Baptists, the immortal author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, might, of all men, have been expected to receive George Fox with open arms. Did George Fox struggle for years through terrible temptations? So did John Bunyan, sinking, if possible, even into deeper abysses. Did George Fox hear voices from heaven? So did John Bunyan, re-

¹ *A brief Reply to Saul's Errand to Damascus.* Anonymous, 1653.

peatedly. Had George Fox visions? So had Bunyan. Did George Fox receive revelations? So did Bunyan. Whoso reads Bunyan's terrible "Grace Abounding," will find the instances. Here let us quote just one, not from that book, but from the latest biography of the great allegorist: choosing it because of its marked similarity to, and significant divergence from, George Fox's notable exclamation in the great meeting where Captain Stoddard was converted. "Do you not see the blood of Christ?" cried Fox, "See it in your hearts." "For I saw it," he tells us, "the blood of the New Covenant, how it came into the heart." Bunyan also had a vision of the blood. "I saw through grace that it was the blood shed on Calvary that did save and redeem sinners, as clearly and as really with the eyes of my soul, as ever methought I had seen a penny loaf bought with a penny."¹ The two visions were equally vivid, the object seen was the same, but nevertheless the different interpretations of the two seers were for them irreconcilable. One saw Christ within, the other Christ without. Bunyan does not appear to have encountered Fox personally, but to him all Quakers were scoffers and blasphemers destined, in company with Ranters and drunkards, to weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth:² while Fox classes Bunyan by name among reprobates and messengers of the devil.³

When the Quakers came to Bedford town in 1665,

¹ *John Bunyan: His Life, Times and Work*. By John Brown, B. A. London 1885, page 125.

² *Some Gospel Truths Opened*, 1656. In Bunyan's Works. Folio edition, Vol. I, p. 528.

³ *The Great Mystery*, page 44.

Bunyan was twenty-eight years old, and had been preaching for about a year, but was as yet unaware of his literary gift. After their wont, the Quakers went straight to the market cross, and there proclaimed their divine commission. The sturdy young tinker, girt in leathern apron, and with hammer in hand, as we may suppose, stepped out from his workshop to listen to them, and immediately opposed their doctrine. Soon after he met them in dispute in St. Paul's Church in Bedford. So deeply was Bunyan moved that now for the first time he ventured into authorship. "Some Gospel Truths Opened," published in 1656, is an unsparing assault on the whole quaker position. Edward Burroughs replied, and Bunyan rejoined: the controversy was vigorously maintained, and there is no lack of material for judging as to the merits of the dispute.

What was it which aroused the Baptist preacher's ire against the Quakers? It was because, as he understood them, they rejected the Christ of God, the historical Christ who was crucified for men, who is in heaven at the right hand of God, who shall come again to judge the world; and put in His place a fiction of their own imagination. "But I would not have thee think," he says to Burroughs, "that I speak at random in this thing. Know for certain that I myself have heard them *blaspheme*, yea, with a grinning countenance, at the doctrine of that Man's second coming from heaven above the stars, who was born of the Virgin Mary. Yea, they have told me to my face that I have used conjuration and witchcraft, because what I preached was according to the Scriptures. I was also told to my face that I preached up an Idol, because I said that the

Son of Mary was in heaven with the same body that was crucified on the Cross. And many other things have they blasphemously vented against the Lord of life and glory, and His precious gospel."¹ Again he says, "I shall tell you of your sister Anne Blackley, who did bid me in the audience of many, to throw away the Scriptures, to which I answered, No! for then the devil would be too hard for me."² Burroughs in his reply to "one John Bunion, one of Gog's army," in which he accuses him of more than a hundred "foule dirty lyes and slanders,"³ by no means succeeded in persuading Bunyan that they two really meant the same thing. On the contrary Burroughs was very sure that they did not mean the same thing, and had small hope of meeting Bunyan in heaven. But our present business is with Bunyan, and it is pleasant to hear him, despite his detestation of their hellish doctrine, testify to the moral character of these abominable heretics. "I tell thee, reader, plainly, that for the generality, the very opinions that are held this day by the Quakers, are the same that long ago were held by the Ranters. Only the Ranters had made them threadbare at an alchouse, and the Quakers have set a new gloss upon them again by an outward legal holiness or righteousness."⁴

The year after Bunyan met them at the market cross, Richard Baxter printed his "One Sheet against the

¹ *Works of Bunyan*, Vol. I., page 522.

² *Bunyan's Works*, page 113.

³ *Truths of Scripture*, &c. By Edward Burroughs, London 1647, 74th page.

⁴ *Unconquered*, &c., Works, Vol. I.

Quakers." Bunyan was a genius ; Baxter, although in his day he occupied an eminence of reputation from the height of which both Fox and Bunyan must have looked small, was but of an ordinary type of character, though a prince in the class to which he belonged. Fervent in his piety, an eloquent and intensely earnest preacher, a skilful leader of men, a good scholar and keen polemic, he was an all-round representative of the dominant orthodoxy of the Commonwealth period : when Romanism was abhorred, prelacy distrusted, dissent condemned, and a reformed Catholic Church, which should include all reasonable and moderate Christians, and have power to silence all others, was still the ideal of the majority. Baxter's antagonism to the Quakers was a foregone conclusion, even had the new doctrine presented itself to him in a rational and respectful manner : but respect for ecclesiastical dignities and sweet reasonableness towards opponents were conspicuously lacking in the first apostles of quakerism. Baxter tells us they shouted after him in the streets, called him dog and devil,¹ bade him go thresh and dig, said he had not the spirit, and would not preach unless he were paid for it.² It seems almost incredible that "holy Richard Baxter," should have been so reviled, but such is his own evidence. No wonder that among the twenty-four reasons against quakerism in his "One Sheet," their denying and railing at the Church and ministers of Christ occupies the first place. The personal attack Baxter might have passed by ; the assault on the sacred office

¹ *One Sheet against the Quakers.* By Richard Baxter, 1657. Reason 6.

² *The Quaker's Catechism.* By Richard Baxter. Query 19.

he could not but resent, for in his belief, a duly constituted ministry was a divinely ordained means of salvation: not indeed absolutely necessary, but in fact, the ordinary channel by which gospel-grace was conveyed. His next objection to them was the uncertainty of their teaching. "I never met with any man that heard of any sum or body of their divinity, faith, or religion, which they published. No, not so much as in a catechism, or short confession. Nor did I ever hear that one of their speakers did ever recite the substance of their belief." It is quite true that the earlier publications of the Friends were not systematic nor scholarly. Penn and Barclay at a later time removed this reproach, but without converting Baxter to their views. The remainder of his twenty-four reasons, with his "Second Sheet," and the "Quaker's catechism," must all be passed by, that we may give his deliberate judgment on the Quakers recorded in his auto-biography. "The Quakers were but the Ranters turned from horrid prophaneness and blasphemy, to a life of extreme austerity on the other side. They made the Light which every man has within him to be his sufficient rule, and consequently the Scriptures and ministry are set light by. They speak much for the dwelling and working of the Spirit in us; but little of justification, and the pardon of sin, and our reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. . . . At first they did use to fall into Tremblings and sometimes Vomiting in their meetings, and pretended to be violently moved by the Spirit; but now that is ceased; they only meet, and he that pretendeth to be moved by the Spirit speaketh; and sometimes they say nothing, but sit an hour or more in silence, and then de-

part. One while divers of them went naked through divers chief towns and cities of the land, as a propheticall act. Some of them have famished and drowned themselves in melancholy, and others undertaken by the power of the Spirit to raise them, (as Susan Pierson did at Claines near Worcester, where they took a man out of his grave, that had so made away with himself, and commanded him to arise and live ; but to their shame). . . . Many Franciscan fryers and other papists have been proved to be disguised speakers in their assemblies, and to be among them ; and it's like are the very soul of all these horrible delusions. But of late one William Penn is become their Leader, and would reform the sect, and set up a kind of ministry among them."¹ Thus did the Quakers appear when looked at through the eyes of Master Richard Baxter, one of the shrewdest and best men of his time, but far from unprejudiced. Nevertheless, he meant the truth, although in the above extract there is sufficient proof of his fallibility. Subsequently he handsomely acknowledges the exemplary devotion of these heretics in keeping up their meetings for worship in the face of implacable persecutors, and thereby acting as a shield for the more timid dissenters.² He admits too, that this courage and self-sacrifice received its reward in the accession of many honest men to their society.

"George Fox digg'd out of his Burrowes," is one of those humorous titles in which our forefathers delighted, the apter because its final word is a play upon the name of Edward Burroughs who assisted Fox in writing his

¹ *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*. Part I., sec. 123.

² *Ibid.* Part II., p. 436.

“Great Mystery,” to which this book refers as the authority on quakerism. Its author was the celebrated Roger Williams, founder of the State of Rhode Island, one of the noblest of the Puritan band which laid the foundation of American greatness in New England. Fleeing from the Laudian persecution, young Williams landed in Boston in 1631 from the first ship which followed the Mayflower and Speedwell. Lovely in his carriage, godly and zealous, having precious gifts, the young minister seemed to be sent by heaven to encourage the wearied, half-starved colonists; and he was welcomed with joy. But he had learned a lesson in the school of persecution which the earlier emigrants had failed to acquire. Bancroft, the United States historian, says, “he was the first person in modern Christendom to assert in its plenitude the doctrine of liberty of conscience, the equality of opinions before the law; and in its defence he was harbinger of Milton, the precursor and superior of Jeremy Taylor.”¹ The Puritan band among whom he found himself were not of that mind. They had crossed the Atlantic to achieve religious liberty for themselves, not for Jews, Turks, infidels and heretics. The young apostle of toleration, beloved as he was by his flock, had to flee into the wilderness; and at last succeeded in founding, and obtaining a charter for, a new colony, the first in Christendom in which liberty of conscience was made the corner stone of civil government. In subsequent years, when Quakers were being whipped and hanged in Salem and Boston, Williams’ colony offered them an asylum. In 1672 George Fox was in America, and visited Rhode Island, where he met with a loving

¹ Bancroft’s *United States*, Vol. I, page 298.

reception. He was lodged in the governor's house, and the governor, the deputy-governor, and several of the principal persons of the colony attended the quaker meetings. Their Yearly Meeting for New England and the adjacent colonies was held at this time in Rhode Island, and numerouslly attended, both by Quakers and outsiders. It was a good time for the Quakers, who rejoiced to hear the voice of their great leader, and of his companions from the old country. Fox felt that a deep impression had been made, and wrote in his Journal, "the glorious power of the Lord was over all, and His blessed truth and life flowing amongst them, had so knit and united them together that they spent two days in taking leave one of another, and of the friends of the island, and then being mightily filled with the presence and power of the Lord, they went away with joyful hearts to their several habitations."¹

The father of the colony, the venerable Roger Williams, at this time over seventy years of age, was no unmoved spectator of these scenes. Liberty of conscience did not with him mean indifference to truth, and perhaps the feeling that he had alienated himself from men whom he revered and loved, by his doctrine of toleration, made him the more eager to prove that he was as zealous as they against this pestilent quaker heresy. He challenged George Fox to a discussion, which for some reason not stated, the Quaker veteran declined. However, disputants were not wanting: Stubbs, Burnyeat, and Edmundson, encountered Williams for four days in succession. Judging from his book, which is a report by Williams of the long debate, the keen

¹ *Journal*, II. 146.

wiry old man pressed the three Quakers hard ; but the combat was a drawn one, both sides claiming the victory. On this occasion we have the rare good fortune of being able to see each side through the eyes of the other. Williams, who was evidently an honourable and loveable old man, though a sharp controversialist, describes John Stubs as "learned in the Hebrew and the Greek," John Burnet, or Burnyeat, as "of a moderate spirit, and a very able speaker;" while William Edmundson he found to be "very ignorant of the scriptures, and of other learning; a stout portly man with a great voice,—a constant exercise of my patience: he would often vapour, and preach long, and would interrupt." What Stubs and Burnyeat thought of Williams we do not know; but Edmundson kept a journal, and wrote in it that they disputed with "one Roger Williams, an old priest, and an enemy to truth;" "all slanders and accusations against the Quakers;" but "the bitter old man could make nothing out of it, and was silenced." Well, neither of these breathed the prayer to see themselves as others saw them; a prayer the fulfilment of which would probably be far from comforting to most of us. But now our question is, what did Roger Williams think about the Quakers and their doctrine?

Passing from Fox's account of his visit to Rhode Island to Williams' controversial book, is like a sudden change of weather. One day the air is balmy, the light golden, and nature is bathed in tranquil beauty; walking through the groves and meadows, we ask ourselves whether Eden could be fairer. The wind shifts, and on the morrow ragged clouds drive across the sky, the great trees toss their limbs as if in agony, rain sweeps the

landscape, and rent boughs bestrew the roads: the whole world seems groaning and travailing in pain. So, reading Fox's Journal, we feel we are communing with a Christian soul of a rare and beautiful piety. In Williams' book, we see the aged Puritan tearing a mask off the Quaker's face, and behold, the angel of light becomes a devil. The transformation at first is inexplicable. Williams was unimpeachably a true Christian as well as Fox, yet each could see in the other only an agent of Satan! How could such misconception exist? A paragraph from Williams' book partially explains it. "I took my seat," the good old man writes, "and began by telling them that the Most High was my witness, that not out of any prejudice against or disrespect to the persons of the Quakers (many of whom I knew and did love and honour)," did he undertake that controversy. Hence, when Roger Williams asserts that Satan was using the Quakers as instruments "to fill his hellish paunch with souls," that "the devil by the claws of this vile fox hath torn at the heart of the Son of God," and that "the Papi-sts' and Quakers' tongues are both spitting and belching out fire from one fire of Hell," we may take all these horrid expressions to be only an emphatic way of expressing difference of opinion on theological topics. Searching for the reason of this violence, we find nothing new in Roger Williams' allegations. Like Bunyan, like Baxter, he charges them with denying Christ, and rejecting the Scriptures. Perhaps he puts the charge more sweepingly, for he declares that "the people called Quakers (in effect), hold no God, no Christ, no Spirit, no angel, no devil, no resurrection, no judgment, no heaven, no hell, but what is in man." Surely

there must have been some ground for a misunderstanding shared in common by three such excellent men as Bunyan, Baxter, and Williams, who formed their judgments quite independently. What this was we must inquire in another chapter; but before proceeding to this, let us take one more glance at the Quakers through contemporary eyes, and this time, not through those of an orthodox believer, but of an arch-heretic and rival prophet. He may be thought no very trustworthy witness, but there is a reason for taking his evidence which will hereafter appear.

Lodowicke Muggleton, tailor and prophet, and founder of the sect of the Muggletonians (which still exists in an obscure condition), was classed together with George Fox by the orthodox; but in truth the two were wide as the poles asunder, differing more from each other than both did from the established religion. Muggleton and his cousin, John Reeve, claimed to be the two Witnesses foretold in the Revelations, and to have received a divine commission to pronounce sentences of eternal judgment, both of salvation and damnation, on individuals by name. Two Ranter prophets, Roberts and Tany, had long abused the credulity of the Londoners, pretending that they had raised dead persons to life, and proposing to lead the hundred and forty-four thousand saints to Jerusalem, to feed them with manna, and divide the Red Sea before them. The Two Witnesses, namely, cursed prophets Roberts and Tany, who were either hanged at home and the other drowned abroad. Muggleton and Reeve regarded this as a proof of their divine commission and proceeded to sentence others. To forty-six of their friends they assured eternal felicity, more than twice

that number were sentenced to hell, including Fox, Whitehead, Penn, Penington and about fifty more of the Quakers. The Quakers freely retaliated by pronouncing the like doom upon Muggleton. Amid these rival prophets ruthlessly damning each other, one feels as in a nightmare dream, or in Bedlam; and is tempted to think them all insane together. Yet, his supposed revelation from heaven excepted, there is no reason to doubt Muggleton's sanity. His doctrine, grossly offensive as it is, is based upon a literal and materialistic interpretation of certain texts of Scripture. God made man in His own image, therefore God is like a man, is a corporeal being. The "Word became flesh" is no figure but a literal fact, and the man Jesus Christ is the only God. "The children of your father, the devil," is not figurative, but means that the devil entered Eve and became the parent of wicked men. Farther detail of these gross imaginations may be spared. Suffice it to say that Muggleton is the extreme of literalists: and we cannot afford to lose the warning of his example. He did not, it is true, carry this principle of interpretation consistently through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. There were texts which would not fit his system, and he met this difficulty by boldly claiming that he alone possessed the key to the true interpretation of Scripture. Still he goes far in his literalism, and abides a signal instance of the perils of that way of approaching the Bible. When once texts of Scripture are accepted as divine facts, not to be questioned by human reason, the Church of Rome can derive thence its doctrine of transubstantiation. Luther, in conference at Marburg, chalking *hoc est corpus meum*, before him on the table, can, behind this

entrenchment, defy the reasoning and the tears of Zwingli and the Swiss reformers, through the live-long day; and a thousand lesser minds can shape out their several heresies on the same fundamental principle. Muggleton again is a fine example of the class of minds to whom the material is the only real, the spiritual always to them being near akin to the merely imaginary. On both grounds Muggleton abhorred the Quakers, as they abhorred him; and yet, strange to say, in the long-continued contest between them, there were Muggletonians who became Quakers, and there were Quakers who turned Muggletonians. In his "Neck of the Quakers Broken" and "A Looking-glass for George Fox," both published in 1663, Muggleton, as a prophet, unsparingly consigns the Quakers to hopeless perdition; but as a man, honestly acknowledges their good qualities, and sincerely pities their unmerited sufferings. "You have baffled the priests of the nation by that light within you, because you are fallen to a more precise exactness of life than they, though your doctrine is worse than theirs."¹ This testimony supports that of Baxter and Bunyan as to the high moral character of the Children of the Light. The worst Muggleton has to say of them, is that at the first they used to fall into witch-craft fits: "supposing it was the Spirit of Christ that moved you to foam at the mouth and sigh and groan and howl;"² and these manifestations he admits had become rare or ceased; for which indeed he takes credit to him self, attributing the change to the terror of his curse. Although he is sure they are all going to

¹ *The Neck of the Quakers Broken*, p. 18.

² *A Looking glass*, &c., p. 36.

hell, he cannot help pitying them for their undeserved sufferings in this life. "If you Quakers would forbear meeting, you need not suffer for your faith at all I am sorry that many innocent harmless people should waste their estates, suffer imprisonment, and impoverish their health, and suffer banishment, and so bring their lives to an end before their time, for that which is not truth."¹ Queer old Muggleton! One hopes thou wert crazy after all: for thou hadst not a hard heart, despite thy ghastly delight in pronouncing sentences of damnation. "I always loved the persecuted better than I did the persecutor," he says; "I have known some that have lost their lives for conscience sake, which I have been sorry for, though I knew they suffered for a mere lie as all you Quakers do."²

After having indicated the character of Muggleton's belief it is hardly necessary to point out the utter antagonism between him and Fox. "The Quakers' Christ," to Muggleton was "nothing else but an Allegory."³ "I am sure," he says, "when I talked with John Perrot about God, he could never find a person, but an infinite Spirit, without a body or person at all . . . I could never find any Quaker to own God to be a person in the form of a man, but an infinite Spirit that fills heaven and earth and all places and things."⁴ To Muggleton the material alone was true: the spiritual was a dream.

¹ *A Looking-glass*, p. 77.

² *Ibid*, p. 76.

³ *Ibid*, p. 21.

⁴ *Neck of the Quakers Broken*, p. 21.

CHAPTER XI.

PENN AND BARCLAY.

BAXTER'S complaint that he could not find anywhere a plain statement of the quaker creed is not surprising. In their early enthusiasm the Children of the Light wrote rhapsodies, not creeds; prophetic denunciations of the apostate churches, not apologies for their own. They met their antagonists with vehement assertions and wrathful denials, which failed to convince, because they could not make it clear that they understood their own teaching and its logical consequences. Borne along on the bosom of a mighty spiritual force, they were sure that it proceeded from the very throne of the Eternal Light, the Eternal Love, because it brought the Light and Love into their hearts and their lives; this they were absolutely sure was the very spirit, the ever-living truth of original Christianity, and all who resisted this, seemed to them enemies of the truth, children of the Wicked One. Meantime for twenty years many a sincere Christian watched their progress in amazement and perplexity, admiring their consistent lives, but marvelling at their eccentricities, and abhorring their pretensions. Fox, Burroughs, and the host of illiterate prophets of quakerism, could not meet the requirements of this state of mind. At length the writings of Penn and Barclay rolled away Baxter's reproach, and rendered

it impossible for any candid opponent to pretend that it was difficult to discover what the Quakers really believed.

William Penn, who was a schoolboy when Baxter published his complaint, joined the Quakers in 1667, and soon became so conspicuous among them, that Baxter mistook him for their leader and reformer. From a worldly point of view he was the greatest acquisition the quakers ever made. Handsome, gallant, talented, wealthy, the heir to court favour, he might have aspired to great employment in the State; but he sacrificed everything, pleasure, prospects, and parental love, to become an outcast and a prisoner for the despised name of quaker. Weighted as he was by his uncourtly and unpopular religion, he nevertheless attained to considerable influence in the reign of James II., and the foundation and government of Pennsylvania sufficiently attest his political sagacity. Wielding a fluent pen, he was the first to put quaker doctrine into readable form, and gain the attention of men of the world. Pepys noted in his diary, Oct. 12, 1668, "Read a ridiculous, nonsensical book set out by Will. Pen for the Quakers;" and again, some months after, "Got W Pen's book against the Trinity. I got my wife to read it to me, and I find it so well writ as, I think, it is too good for him ever to have writ it; and it is a serious sort of book, not fit for everybody to read." Evelyn, too, made acquaintance with this treatise, and recorded, Jan. 3, 1668-9, "About this time one of Sir William Penn's sons published a blasphemous book against the Deity of our blessed Lord." Penn's books were read, we see, not by Friends only, but by the general public; and henceforth for thirty years he was a

literary champion of his faith. "The Christian Quaker," "No Cross, no Crown," and other publications, which fill five volumes, presented the quaker doctrine, not always, perhaps, with perfect self-consistency, but in a simple and attractive form, animated by a genuine piety, which must have secured for the new creed a favourable consideration from all whose minds were open to welcome fresh light.

But Penn's numerous works yield the palm to one book, for generations regarded by the Friends of truth as the best exposition of their belief, the famous "Apology for the True Christian Divinity as the same is held forth and preached by the people in scorn called Quakers," published in 1676, by Robert Barclay, whom we saw in a previous chapter, passing through the streets of Aberdeen with sackcloth on his limbs. Trained in the universities of Paris and his own city, a ripe scholar, a skilled logician, well-read in the Fathers and the Reformers, Barclay brought to his task, wide knowledge, a clear head, and deep spiritual experience. The syllogistic form of the Apology, antiquated even then, and now long obsolete, is pedantic and repulsive to modern taste, but it assists that exactness of expression, and soundness of reasoning, which are the distinctions of the book. The chief interest of the work is in its chapter on Immediate Revelation, which Barclay, in entire agreement with George Fox and the group of preachers who surrounded him, held to be the ultimate foundation of religion, and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and practice. Before presenting Barclay's argument, let us once again survey the position maintained by the Protestant churches.

The Reformation was at first a revolt against the corruptions of the Church, rather than against the idea of Church authority. Luther, assailing Tetzels indulgences in defence of the vital doctrine of justification by faith, took his stand upon the truth which is revealed in the Scriptures, rather than upon the Scriptures themselves. His depreciation of the Epistle of James and the Apocalypse are intelligible only on this hypothesis. But the craving for an infallible court of appeal soon enthroned the Bible in the seat left vacant when the ancient authority of the Church was rejected. The verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Bible became the foundation truth of Protestantism. Calvin held and taught that "the Scriptures have come from heaven as directly as if God had been heard giving utterance to them."¹ This assumption was no novelty invented under the pressure of controversial requirements, but the ancient faith of Christendom, and the Protestants had the advantage of being able to summon Rome itself as a witness in its favour, the dispute between them being, not in respect to the divine character of the Bible, but to the evidence of its authority, and the right to interpret it. Only the immediate application to, and sole dependence upon, the Scriptures were new, and in the interval between Calvin and Fox there had been time enough for this Protestant reliance on the written Word, to become matter of education and habit, to express itself in catechisms and creeds, to infix itself deeply in the hearts of believers, until it

¹ *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. By John Calvin. Translated by Henry Beveridge. (Calvin Translation Society, 1845). Book I., chap. vii., page 90.

seemed to them the very foundation of their faith, apart from which true godliness was inconceivable. The tremendous struggle of three generations with the whole might of the Papacy confirmed the Protestants in their belief that upon this foundation alone they were secure and invincible. How many Christian souls had lived and died in this faith ! How many great preachers and writers had toiled for it ! How many holy martyrs had given their bodies to the flames for it ! For it what great wars had been waged, what long agonies endured ! Now at length, after thirty years of internecine strife, half Europe had won the right to hold and teach the Christian faith upon this basis, and who can wonder that among the Protestant nations it seemed the deadliest heresy to doubt it for a moment ? To the Protestant the Bible had become a miraculous book, not to be criticised but to be revered, the supreme authority, the one infallible foundation.

This foundation was accepted as ultimate, requiring no external support. The question, how do we know that the Bible is the word of God ? was only considered in consequence of the inconvenient claims of the Papists to establish this indispensable truth by the traditions and the infallibility of their Church. Forced thus to glance at the question, Calvin remarks that " the subject well deserves to be treated more at large and pondered more accurately,"¹ but strangely enough, excuses himself from undertaking it. On another page he brands the question as an insult to the Holy Spirit ! His reply to Rome was : we know that the Bible is the word of God by the testimony of the Spirit of God ;

¹ *Institutes*, Vol. I., page 90.

the divine origin of the Scriptures is self-evident to the human mind, when taught by the Spirit. "Scripture bears upon the face of it as clear evidence of its truth, as white and black do of their colour, sweet and bitter of their taste."¹ Upon this testimony of the Spirit, and upon this self-evidence, he places his reliance. The demand of profane men to have it proved to them by reason that Moses and the prophets were divinely inspired is preposterous. "Let it therefore be held as fixed, that those who are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit acquiesce implicitly in Scripture; . . . we ask not for proofs or probabilities on which to rest our judgment, but we subject our intellect and judgment to it, as too transcendent for us to estimate."² Arbitrary and inadequate as this treatment of the subject is, it served the immediate purpose of providing a reply to the Papal objection that the Protestant had no means of knowing what was Scripture and what was not. This was the only difficulty that was at that time pressing. The Protestant mind was not sensible of any other. It accepted the Bible as the Word of God, without requiring these, or any other reasons, for the belief. Had these alleged reasons been more than mere controversial weapons, they would have been used as tests; and it would immediately have been discovered that the contents of Holy Scripture are not throughout homogeneous, that there are portions which are self-evident, and other portions which are not, and that the testimony of the Spirit is not equally clear for the whole. In reality the Bible was accepted as the ultimate foundation, without

¹ *Ibid*, page 91.

² *Ibid*, page 95.

requiring any proof of an assumption upon which everything depended. If doubts intruded, they were regarded as temptations of the devil.

Calvin's teaching was accepted by the English Puritans. Richard Sibbes, "heavenly Sibbes," to whose writings Baxter owed so much, says, "Isaiah was the penman, God the mouth. The head dictateth, the hand writeth. Christ the head dictateth; and his servant writeth."¹ Sibbes holds Calvin's doctrine of verbal inspiration, and he holds it on the same grounds. "Whence hath the Scripture authority? Why—from itself. It is the word, it carrieth its own letters testimonial with it." "How know you the light to be the light but by itself? and that fire is hot but by itself? Principles prove themselves only by experience, and this principle is so proved by itself, that there is no child of God but can say by experience that the word is the word." The learned John Owen, in a little book in which he calls the Quakers "poor deluded fanatics," maintains the doctrine in its bible form, and with a quite amusing simplicity. The prophet, he tells us, is to be believed on the authority of his own statement, that he is a prophet; in spite of which maxim John Owen did not believe in George Fox! But Owen, though he stoutly maintained the miraculous communication of Divine revelation to the writers of Scripture, could at times perceive the difficulty this theory involved; and then he is at heart one with "the poor deluded fanatics." He says, in the same book, "You suppose that God should speak to us from Heaven, as He spak to Moses, or as He spake to Christ, how should we be able to

¹ *Sibbes' Works*. Edition, 1862. Vol. II., p. 495.

know it to be the voice of God? Cannot Satan cause a voice to be heard in the aire, and so deceive us? or may there not be some way of the kind found out whereby men might impose upon us with their delusions? Pope Celestine thought he heard a voice from heaven, when it was but the cheat of his successor. Must we not rest at last in that *το θελον* which accompanies the true voice of God, evidencing itself, and ascertaining the soul beyond possibility of mistake."¹ Richard Baxter, in respect to this topic, occupied an exceptional position. To his acute mind the necessity for proving the Bible to be God's Word was apparent, and he essayed the task which the great Calvin had pronounced impossible. To a modern reader his arguments appear weak, and he acknowledges that his attempt was an offence to his contemporaries.² In their minds, the failure of his logic, far from discrediting the Holy Scripture, would confirm the established belief that proof of its Divine authority was impossible and superfluous. Such was the mental attitude of orthodox Protestantism in England in the middle of the seventeenth century.

Ever since George Fox cried out in Nottingham church, "Oh, no! It is not the Scriptures," for nearly thirty years, the Quakers had laboured under the grievous imputation of denying the Word of God. Vehemently they protested against the charge, but in vain. At length the careful definitions of Robert Barclay set forth their meaning so clearly that henceforth

¹ *Of the Divine Originall, Authority, Self-evidencing Light, and Power of the Scripture.* By John Owen, D.D. Oxford, 1659.

² *Saints' Everlasting Rest.* 2nd Part, p. 210.

there could be no dispute about it among intelligent people. In one sense they denied the Scriptures, in another they did not. They denied that the Scriptures were the supreme authority, and ultimate foundation, claiming those honours for that Holy Spirit, from whom the Scriptures proceeded, and by whom they themselves were inspired. They acknowledged the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures, and in a sense their authority, only an authority secondary and subordinate, being derived from the Spirit. Some quotations will substantiate this representation of their views. In his proposition on Immediate Revelation Barclay says, "the testimony of the Spirit is that alone by which the true knowledge of God hath been, is, and can be only revealed." "These Divine Inward Revelations, which we make absolutely necessary for the building up of true faith, neither do, nor can ever contradict the outward testimony of the Scriptures, or right and sound Reason: yet from hence it will not follow, that these Divine Revelations are to be subjected to the Test, either of the outward Testimony of the Scriptures, or of the natural reason of man, as to a more noble or certain rule and touchstone."¹ The independence of immediate revelation having been thus plainly asserted, he burns his ships behind him by no less plainly assigning the Scriptures to an inferior position. "Because they are only a Declaration of the Fountain, and not the Fountain itself, therefore they are not to be esteemed the principal Ground of all Truth and Knowledge, nor yet the Adequate Primary Rule of Faith and Manners. Nevertheless, as that which giveth a true and faithful Testimony

¹ *Apology*. Sixth Edition in England. 1736, p. 18.

of the first Foundation, they are and may be esteemed a Secondary Rule, subordinate to the Spirit, from which they have all their Excellency and Certainty ; for as by the inward Testimony of the Spirit we do alone truly know them, so they testify that the Spirit is that Guide by which the Saints are led into all Truth ; therefore, according to the Scriptures, the *Spirit* is the first and principal Leader.”¹ The gravity of these propositions is incontestable. Let us look at the arguments Barclay advances in support of them.

If mere logic is to prevail, Barclay ought to have won his opponents over to his doctrine of immediate revelation. Distinguishing between certain, spiritual, saving heart-knowledge, and uncertain, literal, and soaring airy head-knowledge, he puts the Fathers and the Reformers into the witness-box to prove that the true knowledge of God is inwardly revealed by His Spirit and by this alone. “It is the Inward Master,” said Augustine, “that teacheth ; it is Christ that teacheth, it is inspiration that teacheth : where the inspiration and unction is wanting, it is vain that words from without are beaten in.”² Clement, Tertullian, Jerome, Gregory, Cyril, Bernard, are quoted to the same effect. Luther taught, “No man can rightly understand God, or the Word of God, unless he immediately receive it from the Holy Spirit ; neither can anyone receive it from the Holy Spirit except he find it by experience in himself ; and in this experience the Holy Ghost teacheth as in his proper school ; out of which school nothing is taught but mere talk.”³ If it be said that these saints and doctors were only contemplating the Spirit as He oper-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.² *Ibid.*, p. 22.³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

ates in connection with the Scriptures, Barclay observes: "Nor dare any affirm that none come to the knowledge of God and salvation by the inward revelation of the Spirit, without these other outward means, unless they be so bold as to exclude Abel, Seth, Noah, Abraham, Job, and all the holy patriarchs from true knowledge and salvation."¹

Having prepared the way, and combated prejudice, by citing illustrious leaders of the Church in his favour, he proceeds to establish his doctrine by the Scriptures themselves. This argument need not be reproduced here. No one at all acquainted with the Bible needs to be reminded that the operation of the Spirit of God upon the human heart is taught throughout the Old Testament, and is the special promise in the New. We pass then to his next argument, which is this: "That which all Professors of *Christianity*, of what kind soever, are forced ultimately to recur unto, when pressed to the last: that for and because of which all other Foundations are recommended and accounted worthy to be Believed: and without which they are granted to be of no weight at all, must needs be the only most true, certain, and unmovable Foundation of all Christian Faith."² "As to the Papists, they place their foundation in the judgment of the Church and tradition. If we press them to say why they believe as the Church doth, their answer is, 'Because the Church is always led by the infallible Spirit.' So here the leading of the Spirit is the utmost foundation."³ And for the Protestants and Socinians, "all which acknowledge the Scriptures to be the foundation and rule of their faith: the one as subjectively

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

influenced by the Spirit of God to use them ; the other as managing them with and by their own reason : ask both or either of them, why they trust in the Scriptures, and take them to be their rule ? Their answer is, ‘ Because we have in them the mind of God delivered unto us, by those to whom these things were inwardly, immediately, and objectively revealed by the Spirit of God,’ and not because this or that man wrote them, but because the Spirit of God dictated them.”¹ All parties in Christendom unite in making the revelations of the Spirit the foundation of the foundations upon which their own faith is built ; therefore the Spirit is the ultimate foundation and supreme authority.

Thus Barclay has established the doctrine of immediate revelation by the three-fold proof : firstly, it is supported by the testimony of all the best Christian teachers ; secondly, it is the doctrine of the Bible ; thirdly, this very doctrine is that upon which the Bible itself depends for its authority. In conclusion, he offers the verification of experience. It is the privilege of every true Christian to receive such revelations. “ The secret Light which shines in the heart and reproves unrighteousness is the small beginning of the revelation of God’s Spirit, which was first sent into the world, to reprove it of sin. (John xvi. 8.) And as, by forsaking iniquity thou comest to be acquainted with that heavenly voice in thy heart, thou shalt feel, as the old man, or the natural man, that savoureth not the things of God’s Kingdom is put off, with his evil and corrupt affections and lusts ; I say, thou shalt feel the new man, or the spiritual birth and babe raised, which hath its spiritual

¹ *Ibid*, p. 65.

senses, and can see, feel, taste, handle, and smell, the things of the spirit, but till then, the knowledge of things spiritual is but as an historical faith. . . . Wait then for this ; and as thou becomest fitted for it, thou shalt receive more and more, and by a living experience easily refute their ignorance, who ask, How dost thou know that thou art acted by the Spirit of God ? Which will appear to thee a question no less ridiculous, than to ask one whose eyes are open, How he knows the sun shines at noon-day ? And though this be the surest and certainest way to answer all objections ; yet by what is above written it may appear, that the mouths of all such opposers as deny this doctrine may be shut by unquestionable and unanswerable reasons.”¹

The “Apology” failed to convince the Puritans; made so little impression upon them that no one of note thought it worth his while to write a reply. Barclay wrote the book in Latin, and published the original edition at Amsterdam in 1676. Quakerism had nothing local and national in its character, but aimed at the reformation of Christendom, and conversion of the world. Hence it was fitting that the “Apology” should first appear in what was still the common language of the scholars of Europe. On the continent two or three theologians replied to it in the same language. Translated by its author, three English editions appeared in 1678, and eight more before the end of the century, besides three printed in Dublin and six in America. The Friends promptly discerned the value of the work, and pushed its circulation. George Keith’s peaks of collections made in all their meetings to pay the expense of an edition of eight thousand copies

¹ *Ibid*, pp. 66 and 67.

for distribution. Nevertheless, this formidable attack on the Protestant position was allowed to go unanswered by any leader of the Church, was altogether unnoticed, except by obscure individuals; and it was left to George Keith, who was at the time of its publication a zealous Quaker and close comrade of Barclay, to issue the first formal answer in the year 1702. What a contrast to the reception of George Fox, James Nayler, and the illiterate champions who rallied round them! In Fox's "Great Mystery," which appeared in 1659, nearly a hundred names of writers against quakerism are mentioned, who, within ten years, had hurried to the defence of the ark of the Lord against the heretics. Many of these, including Bunyan, Baxter and Owen, were living long after the "Apology" appeared. Faldo too was living, and could hardly have missed seeing the book; Roger Williams was living; but all kept silence. How can this neglect be accounted for? Was the "Apology" too hard a nut for any one of these doughty controversialists to crack? That can hardly be the explanation. Keen-witted Baxter, learned Owen, and a hundred more, surely could have replied to Barclay if they had chosen. Or if not; if they had felt the reasoning of the "Apology" to be unanswerable, they would have owned their defeat and embraced the quaker faith. We are shut up, therefore, to the conclusion that the reasoning of the "Apology" did not convince, and that its neglect is an indication that it made but a slight impression. As quakerism became better understood, (and Barclay's book must have greatly promoted the understanding of it) so it became less feared. The churches by this time were used to its presence, knew the worst that it could do, and no longer feared

the defection of the great body of the people. Although another thirty or forty years were to pass before the Quakers themselves began to be sensible that their progress was arrested, they were already settling down into the dimensions of a sect, which a century later would be one of the smallest and most obscure. Barclay summed up in a masterly manner all that could be said on behalf of quakerism; and the age practically replied, if this be all, we need trouble our heads no further about the matter.

The failure is indisputable, but it is by no means thereby established that Barclay and the Quakers were in the wrong. Why did Protestantism fail in Spain, Italy, France, Austria, Bavaria, Poland? Why did Christianity itself fail in western Asia, and northern Africa? All these problems are too complex for solution in the present conditions of human knowledge, but in regard to them all it may safely be asserted that mere failure does not justify an adverse judgment. The end is not yet reached, and who shall say that the failure is not merely temporary? Possibly in the case of quakerism, the blame of its failure may belong principally to those who rejected it. Nevertheless there must have been reasons why it could not compel the attention and assent of the earnest and thoughtful among its contemporaries; and when we examine Barclay's "Apology" more closely, it is evident that he granted too much and proved too little, to carry with him the mind of the age.

He granted too much. Himself believing with the most profound conviction, and desiring to persuade all Christians, that the true and sure foundation of their

faith is, not a collection of ancient documents, which, translated into English, could be bought in one volume for five shillings and carried in the pocket, but the living and experienced action of the Holy Spirit of God in the human heart; he allowed that volume to retain the miraculous character ascribed to it by the prevalent orthodoxy. If Barclay could have studied the Scriptures in the enlightened freedom which his own great principle ought to have conferred, he would have seen that the Protestant conception of the verbal infallibility of the Bible was erroneous; and had this been demonstrated, the readers of his book would have been compelled to take refuge in the teachings of the Spirit, if they would not retrace their steps to Rome. But the faith of the Quakers in the infallibility of the Bible was as complete and uncritical as that of their opponents. The utmost extent of their audacity was to point out the uncertainty of transcriptions and translations, and although this is of itself sufficient to take away the assurance of infallibility which the Protestant theory requires, instead of insisting upon the argument, they practically ignored it, and by accepting the Scriptures as the sole judge in controversies, they re-instated them in the position of supremacy, from which they had been displaced. The "Apology" is a striking illustration of this inconsistency. Barclay in one place boldly claims that the Spirit is a clearer and more certain teacher than the Bible. "The real and undoubted experience whereof I myself have been a witness of, with great admiration of the love of God to his children in these latter days. For I have known some of my friends, who profess the same faith with me, faithful servants of the Most High

God, and full of divine knowledge of his truth, as it was immediately and inwardly revealed to them by the Spirit, from a true and living experience; who not only were ignorant of the Greek and Hebrew, but even some of them could not read their own vulgar language; who, being pressed by the adversaries with some citations out of the English translation, and finding them to disagree with the manifestation of truth in their own hearts, have boldly affirmed the Spirit of God never said so; and that it was certainly wrong; for they did not believe that any of the Holy Prophets or Apostles had ever written so; which, when I on this account seriously examined, I really found to be errors and corruptions of the translators.”¹ In spite of his admiration of this proof of the superiority of the Spirit to the Book, almost immediately Barclay surrenders this advantage. Because the Scriptures “are commonly acknowledged by all, to have been written by the Dictates of the Holy Spirit, and that the Errors which may be supposed by the Injury of Times to have slipt in, are not such, but that there is a sufficient clear testimony left to all the Essentials of the Christian Faith; we do look upon them as the only fit outward Judge of Controversies among Christians; and that whatsoever Doctrine is contrary to their Testimony, may therefore justly be rejected as False. And for our parts we are very willing that all our Doctrines and Practices be tried by them; which we never refused, nor ever shall, in all Controversies with our Adversaries, as the Judge and Test. We shall also be very willing to admit it as a positive certain Maxim, *that whatsoever any do, pretending to the Spirit, which is contrary to*

¹ *Ibid*, page 82.

*the Scriptures, be accounted and reckoned a Delusion of the devil."*¹ Again, he proves by a simple syllogism that it is not necessary to believe that the Bible is complete.

"That which cannot be proved by Scripture is no necessary Article of Faith.

"But the Canon of the Scripture; to wit, that there are so many Books precisely, neither more or less, cannot be proved by Scripture :

"Therefore, it is no necessary Article of Faith."²

The argument is unanswerable : but he has practically abandoned it by the affirmation "that the Scriptures give a full and ample testimony to all the principal doctrines of the Christian faith,"³ and by his distinction "betwixt a revelation of a new gospel, and new doctrines, and a new revelation of the good old gospel, and doctrines: the last we plead for, but the first we utterly deny."⁴ This is, in effect, an abdication of the supremacy of the Spirit, for it limits that Spirit to the Scripture, although it has been proved that Scripture itself does not define its own limits. To be logically faithful to his own doctrine, Barclay should have shown that it is impossible for God to contradict Himself, and therefore the revelations of His Spirit in all ages must be perfectly one and self-consistent, and, supposing that He should see fit to inspire a supplement to the Bible, it would certainly be in harmony with the existing Scriptures; but it is not impossible for men to be unable to discern the consistency of a succeeding revelation with that which preceded: as was the case with the Jews to whom the New Testament appeared to contra-

¹ *Ibid.*, page 82.

² *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁴ *Ibid.*

dict the Old. From these premises the deduction that the authority of the Spirit is supreme, is easy ; because the immediate revelation needs no confirmation, whereas the Scripture is liable to misinterpretation, and requires the confirmation of the Spirit. Logic, however, though made much of when it answers one's purpose, is seldom allowed to have its own way all through. Barclay and the Quakers had been born and bred in the common faith in the infallibility and perfection of the Bible, and had no inclination to part with this faith. Their reliance upon the Spirit was an addition to their previous belief, which seemed to them in no way to interfere with that belief, rather to place it on a secure foundation. But the Protestant wanted no other foundation than the Bible itself. Grant him the divine certainty of the written Word, and he was content. The Romanist might offer him the infallibility of the Church, the Quaker might offer the immediate revelation of the Spirit, as foundations for the foundation, but he declined to listen to either. There might be some truth in what they urged, but if so, it ended in the confirmation of the truth of the Bible ; being assured of which he could afford to disregard them both.

Granting too much, Barclay proved too little. Immediate revelation ! The direct teaching of the Spirit of God ! Who would not crave this priceless gift, if indeed it be possible for man ? Even the possession of an infallible Book leaves room for many controversies, difficulties, doubts, which men long to have set at rest. If Barclay had proved his doctrine, the Puritans would not have treated it with cold neglect. Barclay, if he could bear it, might be surprised at this complaint. Have I

not given, he might say, irrefragable proofs from Christian experience, and from Scripture? Have I not pointed out the way in which each one may verify it for himself? The believer can say, "one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." To attempt to prove immediate revelation to those who have no experience thereof, would be speaking of light to the born-blind. But to this it may be replied that Barclay himself has given a definition of immediate revelation which indicates exactly the kind of proof which is possible and necessary. "This divine revelation, and inward illumination is that which is evident and clear of itself forcing, by its own evidence and clearness, the well-disposed understanding to assent, irresistibly moving the same thereunto, even as the common principles of natural truths do move and incline the mind to a natural assent: as, that the whole is greater than its part; that two contradictories can neither be both true, nor both false." This admirably clear definition excites to a still higher pitch our sense of the desirability of this blessing. Evident, and clear of itself, in certainty equivalent to mathematical and logical axioms—who would not give all that he hath, to possess religious truth of that kind? But in giving the definition, Barclay has become responsible for furnishing the proof. How can self-evident truth be proved? Only by self-manifestation: no other proof is possible, and no other is needed. But this *is* needed, and what hindered Barclay from unfolding the contents of this revelation, so far as he possessed it? It in no way lessens the value of self-evident truth that it is communicated from mind to mind. Before Euclid the self-evident truths of

geometry were evident to few or none, and since his time successive generations of school-boys have passed over his *pous asinordum*, to attain acquaintance with the properties of a triangle; but it diminishes not the certainty nor the value of mathematical truth that it came to us through the Greek philosopher. It was incumbent upon Barclay to set out the contents of that revelation which he had received. Admitted that some would be unable to see the truth even when set before their eyes: that it requires, as he said, the well-disposed mind to perceive it: the truth itself would test their capacity, and his responsibility extended no farther than the communication of what he had received. This, Barclay nowhere attempts to do, and the omission is made the more conspicuous by his reference to one and only to one, truth so known: "that secret light which shines in the heart, and represses unrighteousness." This is a truth capable of verification, and is actually verified by all, unless the most degraded. This secret light shining within and reproving unrighteousness is indeed the very foundation of morality and religion. Take it away, and all Bibles, churches, revelations, religions, are an empty name: nor, having this, if we have naught beside, can man complain that he is totally destitute of light from Heaven. Having indicated this, why did not Barclay proceed to state what other truths came to him in the same divine light? His silence, his practical adoption of the Scriptures as containing the revelations, suggest the suspicion that he found no other truth similarly revealed. The Protestant might easily suppose that the Quaker meant no more than he himself meant when he said, that the Scriptures are known to be God's

word, by the testimony of the Spirit. Conscience convicts of sin: only the Bible reveals the remedy, and by the revelation proves itself divine. Securely entrenched in this strong position, the orthodox believer could afford to disregard Barclay's unanswerable logic. Possibly, it occurred to his mind, as probably it has occurred to the reader's, that despite their antagonism, there were important points of agreement, which in the end might reconcile them. But in the meantime, Barclay had left immediate revelation an unknown quantity, while practically he submitted to the authority of Scripture as unreservedly as the Puritan did. Under these circumstances it is no wonder that the Puritan clung to an authority known, tried, and proved; and declined to recognize what seemed shadowy and uncertain.

William Penn, the popular exponent of quakerism, was in the field before Barclay, and continued long after him. "The Christian Quaker, and his divine testimony stated and vindicated from Scripture, Reason, and Authority," not the earliest of his works, was published in 1669, seven years before Barclay's *Apology*; and "Primitive Christianity Revived in the faith and practice of the People called Quakers," appeared in 1696, six years after Barclay's death. Their writings are dissimilar as the men. Barclay, a scholar and a philosopher, learned himself and addressing the learned, is so clear a thinker, so careful and exact in expression, that no one can miss his meaning. Penn, the practical statesman, is copious, fluent, transparent, concealing nothing, but leaving us in uncertainty, because he himself has not fathomed the depths of his subject. Their different ways of stating their case show the difference of their in-

tellectual capacity. Barclay, eschewing the uncertainty of figurative language, begins with a precise term, immediate revelation, which he unfolds in an ample and exact definition. Penn avoids definition, and cleaves to the use of scriptural figures. He speaks of the Light, and if asked to explain it, he tells us it is also called "spirit, grace, word, fire, sword, hammer, power, seed, truth, way, life, blood, water, bread, unction," a multiplicity of epithets which only confuses the mind. With a show of reason the Bishop of Cork complained, "You have never been able yet, that I could find, to make out what you mean by the Light of Christ within man. For you will not allow it to be either the natural, rational faculty, or common, innate notions, or natural conscience, or conscience illuminated by the preaching of the gospel, and the operation of the Holy Ghost thereby;"¹ and, quite unconscious that he himself was glibly using terms which involve the deepest mysteries, desired them to understand their own meaning, before trying to make others understand it. Penn can only reply that they mean what the Scriptures mean, when they call Christ "the Light of the world;"² and his utmost endeavour at plainness of speech can reach no further than to say it is the "very principle of life and light, which illuminates the conscience,"³ a tenacious clinging to metaphorical language which indicates an inability to think without it.

Penn was not aware of his own defect. He seemed to himself to be living in broad daylight, and that if an-

¹ *Tracts of Barclay*, 3rd edition. London, 1782. Vol. V. p. 361.

² *Ibid.* page 386.

³ *Ibid.* page 387.

other could not understand him, it must be because he was a "natural man, who understandeth not the things of the Spirit." Hence he exhibits none of Barclay's caution, but is ready to tell us offhand what are the contents of that immediate revelation, as to which Barclay was so chary of information. In "the Christian Quaker," having proved from the Scriptures that the Gentiles were lighted with a divine light, he proceeds to set forth the truths thus communicated to them.

"First, then, from their own authorities I am taught to affirm: That the Gentiles believed in One holy, infinite, and eternal God.

"Secondly, That they did therefore so believe, because God had imprinted the Knowledge of Himself on their hearts; or, in our language, that He had lighted all mankind with a divine light, which, if obeyed, would lead to eternal happiness.

"Thirdly, That they held and practised high sanctity of life.

"Fourthly, That they affirmed the immortality of the soul, and eternal rewards of felicity or misery, according to man's obedience to, or rebellion against the eternal God, his Creator."¹

These statements Penn supports by many pages of quotations from the ancients; beginning with Orpheus and Hesiod, and proceeding through a long chain to Seneca and Epictetus. It is not our business now, to discuss how far Penn's opinion about the degree of enlightenment granted to the heathen is substantiated by what we know of them. We are more directly concerned in our own case, and these statements interest us, because

¹ *Works*, Vol. I. page 188.

if they are the contents of the immediate revelation given to the heathen, then we shall find them also revealed to us, in the same immediate and self-evident manner: that is, on the hypothesis that our minds are "well-disposed," that we duly attend to the shining of the secret light within, and do not obscure it by wilful disobedience. Are these truths so revealed to every sincere Christian? It is enough to point out that Penn's fourth head contains matter which is clearly not self-evident. The natural immortality of the soul, and the eternity of future punishment, are doubted or denied by many who are firm believers in the Bible; and certainly are not clear and sure to all honest truth-loving minds, apart from the Bible. Penn therefore is not a reliable guide to the knowledge of immediate revelation.

Again, nearly thirty years later, Penn wrote in his "Primitive Christianity Revived," another account of the revelations of the Inner Light, and this time from the Christian point of view. This divine, universal, efficacious principle gives man,—

"First, The knowledge of *God* and of *himself*; and therein a sight of his duty, and disobedience to it.

"Secondly, It begets a true *sense* and *sorrow* for sin, in those that seriously regard the convictions of it.

"Thirdly, It enables them to *forsake* sin, and sanctifies them in it.

"Fourthly, It applies God's mercies in Christ, for the *redemption* of *sin* that are past unto justification, upon *such sincere* repentance and obedience.

"Fifthly, It gives to the faithful, perseverance unto a

perfect man, and the assurance of blessedness, world without end." ¹

In this place the Light within is regarded as an active force rather than as mere knowledge. This is an important observation which deserves to be well-considered. But confining ourselves now to the Light in its character of mental perception, and comparing this second exposition of its contents with the former, it is noticeable that the doctrine of justification through Christ is added: an addition which cannot be brought under Barclay's definition of immediate revelation, and confirms the view that Penn had no accurate conception of the subject.

Leaving the question of the validity of its root-idea, if we look at quaker doctrine as a whole, as it is seen in the pages of Penn and Barclay, we are sensible of an apparent inconsistency. At one moment we are contemplating a reasonable and Scriptural Christianity, more attractive than that of the Puritans; at another moment we seem to lose sight of Christianity altogether, and to be gazing at a simple universal religion of Nature—pure theism, in which obedience to the measure of light granted to each man, is the sum and substance of the faith. Scriptural quakerism, if we may so denominate the first of these two aspects of the doctrine, fairly merits the appellation, primitive Christianity revived. There is an honest attempt, successful in good measure, though somewhat marred by an overstrictness of literal interpretation, which would least of all be expected from the Quakers, to get rid of the accretions of fifteen hundred years, and to return to the simple teachings of

¹ *Works*, Vol. V. p. 231.

the New Testament. The definitions and developments of the Catholic creeds, and the theological systems of the Reformers, are passed by, in order to learn the Christian faith at the mouth of the Evangelists, Apostles, and Christ Himself. If in the use of the New Testament there appears to be a marked leaning to the Johannine documents, this is a reaction from the ultra-Paulinism of Luther and Calvin, which one may easily condone. Still better is the determination to displace dogmatic theology from its pre-eminence, and to make practical morality, holiness of heart and life, the essential thing. If one part of the Scriptures more than another, embodies and expresses the quaker view of the Christian religion, it is the Sermon on the Mount. Theologians in those days depreciated "mere morality," and that estimate continued right down to the youth of the present generation, and even still continues in some quarters. Penn tells us, in his time some went so far as to preach, "that there are thousands of moral men in hell."¹ But in the teeth of popular prejudice, Penn was not afraid to say that in his judgment, morality, not dogma, makes a Christian. "For it is not opinion, or speculation, or notions of what is true, or assent to articles or propositions, though never so soundly worded that makes a man a true believer, or a true Christian; but it is the conformity of the mind and practice to the will of God."² Whatever may be the errors and deficiencies of the Quakers, no reader of Barclay's "Apology," and Penn's "No Cross, no Crown," can fail to recognise that they were hearty believers in the "good

¹ *Works*, Vol. IV, p. 115.

² *Works*, Vol. V, p. 9.

old gospel," learnt first-hand from its primitive sources in the New Testament, and that for their own personal salvation they were sincerely obedient to its teaching.

But there is another aspect of quakerism manifested in their writings, which, although they themselves seem to be quite unaware of any incongruity, provokes the reader to exclaim: this is not Christianity at all, this is a new and independent religion, of which we never heard before! It may be true, it may be false, but one thing is clear, it is not the religion of the Bible! There is but one doctrine in this religion, that of the inner Light; there is but one way of salvation, obedience to the Light. Every man has some degree of illumination by this Light, and each one is responsible for that degree, and for no more. The simplicity, the universality, the apparent justice, the apparent self-evidence, of this brief creed, commend it to the mind; and if it were presented, not as the whole truth, but as a part of the truth, it would be easy of acceptance. But Penn and the Quakers frequently present this doctrine, as though it were the whole truth of Christianity. Pythagoras and Solon, Socrates and Plato, Zeno, Plutarch, Marcus Aurelius, and many more, who never heard the name of Christ, or only heard to disbelieve, appear in their writings as essentially good Christians: ¹ and on the same principle, all those who have never heard the Gospel are as truly enlightened by Christ, and as able to attain salvation through Christ, as the well-instructed Biblical scholar in England.

This startling doctrine which seems to dethrone historical Christianity, and to degrade it to the rank of

¹ *Christian Quaker*. Chapters vii. to xlii.

a mere species of the one true, universal, all-embracing, natural theism, is nevertheless discovered by the Quakers in the Christian Scriptures. Penn finds it whole and complete in the first chapter of John's first epistle. "God is Light. If we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." The benefit accrues for the sake of Christ's death, but it may be received by those who have no knowledge of that death. The universal religion is connected with historical Christianity by identifying Christ with the Light within. In some mystical sense, Christ is crucified afresh in every human heart which resists the Light; He rises again within the heart, when the Light is obeyed and expels the darkness. It was this aspect of quakerism which seemed to Bunyan to be a denial of Jesus, the Son of Mary, who was crucified without the gate of Jerusalem. It was this which made Muggleton say the Quaker's Christ is a mere allegory. But in truth the Quakers were no deniers of historical Christianity. Every word of the four Gospels was as precious to them as to the orthodox believer. Nevertheless they maintained the all-sufficiency of the Light within, apart from the Scriptures, with the fullest conviction of its truth. They heartily believed in historic Christianity, and as heartily believed that this historic belief was not necessary for salvation. Salvation was to them an internal spiritual process, an inner revelation, whereby the soul is purged from sin, and brought into obedient harmony with the Divine will. They held fast both the New Testament facts in which the spiritual essence of Christianity is enshrined, and the perfect independence of that

essence of all external historical embodiment. They believed the Gospel that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and with equal fervour they believed that sinners could be saved in total ignorance of the name and history of Jesus Christ.

In the age of Barclay and Penn this inconsistency could not be satisfactorily handled. The first generation of Quakers held both views with equal tenacity. In the later course of quakerism, sometimes the scriptural, and sometimes the spiritual aspect of their faith, obtained the ascendancy, while the other aspect was depreciated or neglected. The Children of the Light have swayed from side to side, but they have made no advance. Only now at length after two centuries have elapsed, the light of a new day begins to dawn, in which, though dimly as yet, the eternal, spiritual truth of the Divine manifestation in Christ Jesus is seen as it has never been seen before. But before we turn to gaze upon the increasing brightness of the new day, there is the story of the decline of quakerism to be told.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WRITINGS OF GEORGE FOX.

Fox's Journal does not mention the *Apology* nor any of Barclay's or Penn's works. There is no evidence that Fox ever read the *Apology*, and if he did, it is questionable whether he perfectly sympathised with its logical precision. To himself his own simple spontaneous effusions, the outpourings of a mind filled with the Spirit, might not unnaturally seem a more satisfactory and more authoritative statement of the truths revealed to him. It seems in harmony with his character that he should neither praise nor condemn, that he should express no opinion whatever, on the work of his coadjutors. He was sure that he himself was taught of God, and for the delivery of his own message he was responsible. Others, too, were taught of the same Spirit, and so far as they all spoke and wrote under that guidance, there could not but be unity among them, unity which would manifest itself, requiring no attestation from him.

The verbosity, monotony, tautology, of Fox's three thousand pages sorely try the long-suffering reader. Yet in justice to the author it must be remembered that he did not propose to inflict on any human being the penance of reading the whole, still less of reading them straight through within a limited time. Most of his writings were brief, varying from an epistle of a dozen lines to a

pamphlet of twenty or thirty pages, and were addressed to particular persons, classes, or localities, to fulfil an immediate purpose. There are only two works of formidable length among them, and of these the Journal alone was distinctly designed for posterity. The other "The Great Mystery of the Great Whore Unfolded," consists of replies to about a hundred assailants of quakerism, and its mission was no wider than the range of the attack. Artistically considered it is a wretched piece of work. There is no attempt to classify the charges, nor to systematise the defence. Each book written against the Quakers is dealt with separately, after this fashion. "Ralph Farmer, his book called 'Satan enthroned in his Chair;' which is a title suitable to himself, who is discerned by the Children of the Day to be Satan's seedsman." The Rev. Ralph Farmer, vicar of St. Nicholas, Bristol, having called the quaker teaching "Sathanicall depths and diabolical delusions," was repaid in like coin. Abuse was met by abuse; Fox being apparently quite unable to understand that any good man could possibly have mental difficulties about quakerism, and his replies to objections must often have intensified hostility. Farmer, for instance, made the remark: "We do not pretend to infallibility as you do."¹ In answer to this Fox says: "Who are in the Spirit are in that which is infallible." . . . "None are ministers of the Spirit, but who have that which is infallible, and are in that which is infallible. So ye do well to confess that ye have not the infallible Spirit; ye are not infallible, and so no ministers of the Spirit." This answer was not

¹ *Great Mystery*, page 154, (Philadelphia Edition of Works of George Fox, 1831.)

calculated to conciliate Ralph Farmer. But again it must be repeated, though it has already been said more than once ; to understand the true spirit of George Fox, and the secret of his great influence, we must not judge him as he is seen in the arena of controversy ; but watch him in his evangelistic work, and in his pastoral care of the Church which he gathered.

Fox's mission was, in his own belief, not to a nation, nor even to a continent, but to the world. To fulfil it he wrote epistles to the Pope, to the Kings of Spain, France, and Poland, to the Emperors of Austria and China, to the great Turk and the King of Algiers, also to the Jews. Protestant prejudice marred the address to the Pope, and sheer ignorance that to the Turk. The Pope is told to his face that he is Antichrist ; and in the letter to the Sultan Fox alleges that the Mohammedans worshipped the sun, moon, and stars, and idols of stone, wood, and metal.¹ In pleading with Christian princes for toleration, Fox is reasonable, dignified, and pathetic. His address from his prison at Lancaster to the Houses of Parliament shows his humanity and political sagacity :

“ Friends,—Here is a few things for you to take into consideration.

“ Let no man be put to death for cattle or money, or any such outward things. For by the law of God, they were to restore fourfold, and if they had it not, to be sold for their theft.

“ Let your laws be drawn up in one short volume.

“ Let all writs, indictments, &c., have no more in them than can justly be charged upon people.

¹ *Works*, Vol. IV., page 216.

“Let no prisoner lie long in gaol, for they learn badness one of another.

“And let no one be prosecuted about church worship.

“From a love of your souls,

“G. F., a prisoner in Lancaster Castle.”¹

Advice far in advance of that day ; some of it still waiting to be followed. But religious, not political reform, was Fox's first object, and it is in his religious writings we see him in his best mood. Here is a brief epistle addressed to the quaker society, which in a few lines contains the essence of his doctrine :

“All Friends, be low, and dwell in the life of God, to keep you low. Ye are the salt of the earth, to make it savoury unto God. Ye are the light of the world. Therefore walk ye in the light of Christ, whose light doth justify you. Who then shall condemn you ? Therefore in that dwell, which doth condemn all the evil in the world.—G. F.”²

The calmness of tone, the practical character of this brief epistle, exhibit Fox as he was habitually. Occasionally, but rarely, he breaks out into rapturous exclamations. “We witness the happy day of the Lord is come, the good and happy day, and glad tidings to souls, the day of Christ. Praises, praises be to Him for ever ! All ye children of the Lord, praise the Lord for ever, sing praises unto the Lord for evermore ! This is the day of salvation, and the everlasting gospel. Glad tidings are come unto our souls, free pardon of sin by Jesus Christ, who is come to take away sin and to destroy

¹ *Doctrinal Works*, Vol. I., page 265.

² *Epistles*, Vol. I., No. lxii.

the works of the devil.”¹ But these outbursts are exceptional. For the most part Fox’s emotions were deep rather than noisy, and his religion is first and before all things practical. “Tradesmen, this is the word of the Lord to you. Ask no more than ye will have for your commodity; and keep to yea and nay in your communications.”² And Fox not only knew this was the word of the Lord, but the tradesmen who heard him deliver his message, received it as the word of the Lord, and obeyed it accordingly. “Some of you do know, when truth first broke forth in London, that many tradesmen could not take so much money in their shops for some time as would buy them bread and water.” Nevertheless these men, though the bread was scant, though the wife pined, and the children cried, stuck to their strange fashion of honest yea and nay, until the public discovered that the new way was better than the old. “Now they will trust you before their own people, knowing that you will not cheat nor wrong, nor cozen, nor oppress them. For the cry is now amongst them that are without, ‘Where is there a Quaker of such and such a trade?’ So that they will deal with Friends before they will deal with their own.”³ Into every department of life Fox carried this same light of truth and righteousness. Total abstinence in his day was not yet above the horizon, nor had he any vision of local option, or total prohibition of the liquor traffic, but to those engaged in this business he writes: “First, all you vintners, that sell wine, that keep taverns, or such like

¹ *Doctrinal Works*, Vol. I., page 47.

² *Ibid.*, page 96.

³ *Epistle*, ccli.

houses, and all you innkeepers, and you that keep victualling houses, ale-houses, strong-water shops, see that you never let any man or woman have any more wine, ale, strong drink, brandy, or strong waters, than what is for their health and good.”¹ Many vintners and others owned the word of the Lord, and signed their names to this document as a pledge that they would carry on business in its spirit.

Prosy as Fox’s style is, now and again, though, it must be confessed, rarely, a gleam of humour shines across his page, and we catch an amusing glimpse of the people among whom he bore his testimony. We enter the church, and see the minister, stuck up “in a thing like a tub,” preaching by the hour-glass, and when the sand has run down, he draws to a conclusion, saying, “the time is past, neighbours.”² We see the fashionable folk with their gay apparel, men and women decked out in bright colours, with gold or silver lace, their hair powdered so that “their backs look as if they were carrying bags of meal.”³ Fox was practical enough to hold that showing mercy to the poor was better than attending prayer meetings and hearing sermons. “Is this true Christian religion,” he asks, “to see so much preaching, praying, sermons, lectures; and to see so many blind and lame, poor men and women, and children, up and down the streets, and at the steeple-house doors? Is not this an ill savour among you, and in you and the high profession ye profess? . . . the poor, ready to be starved, cry in the street; and you are so proud, that

¹ *Epistle*, cccclxxxi.

² *Doctrinal Works*, Vol. I., page 319.

³ *Ibid*, Vol. I., page 139.

you cannot tell how to go up and down the streets, in your laced shoes, and clothes, and hats.”¹ But the religious exhortations to the Children of the Light are not less pointed and practical than those addressed to the outside world. He sees the Friends growing rich, and warns them against the danger. He writes to America: “All Friends everywhere that have Indians or blacks; you are to preach the gospel to them and other servants, if you be true Christians, for the gospel of salvation was to be preached to every creature under heaven.”² In a word, what George Fox was as a preacher, that he was as a writer. With pen and with voice, he gave forth the same message. “Wait in the Light of God and walk in it; then ye will have unity one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse you from all sin.”

Exacter definition, clearer explanation, we shall look for in vain. The Scripture metaphors, the light, the seed, fully satisfy Fox, and he can conceive of no difficulty in comprehending them, except that which arises from lack of the truth they signify. “For now the children of light have light, and can see one another; the children of Egypt, Sodom, and Babylon cannot see one another. . . . A prophet is a seer; and so with the light he will see. . . . The path of the just is a shining light; the path of the unjust is darkness. So there are but two paths. Now the unjust cannot abide to hear talk of the light, but call it natural, and created, and made, or conscience. They do not know what to call it, whose darkness cannot comprehend the light, though it

¹ *Doctrinal Works*, Vol. I., page 135.

² *Epistle*, ccclv.

shines in the darkness. . . . A dark man is a blind man. A blind man hath not true judgment. Therefore how should they call it otherwise but a natural light, a created or made light? So the Pharisees believed that Christ was to come, and preached him to come: as the Protestants and Papists preach him that he is come, and to come, and can tell by Scripture where he was crucified, as the Jews could tell by Scripture where he was to be born. But they were all against Christ the light. When he came they said Christ had a devil! And so they are no true believers, neither Protestants nor Papists, who only believe Christ is come, from Scripture, as the Jews believed Christ was to come, from Scripture." . . .¹ All Christians admit the insufficiency of a merely historical belief, but if Fox is asked to explain more precisely what he means by the light; what is taught by immediate revelation; and to what extent it makes us independent of the external history; the request meets with no definite response. The only content of the immediate revelation explicitly announced by Barclay, is the knowledge of sin; to which in one place, Fox adds the knowledge of salvation. "With the light with which you see your sin, which Christ Jesus hath enlightened you withal, with the same you may see your salvation, Christ Jesus, from whence it comes, to save you from your sin."² But there is the same defect here that was noticed in Penn's wide statements: Fox does not make it apparent that this important addition is either self-evident or independent of Scripture.

¹ *Epistle*, cclxv.

² *Doctrinal Works*. Vol. I. page 206.

In reply to Baxter, Fox denies the infallibility of the Scriptures. "And the Scriptures which signify writings, outward writings with paper and ink, are not, as you say, infallible."¹ But this I understand to refer to the material book, the thing that can be grasped by the hand, or at most to the copies and translations as distinguished from the originals. In the same paragraph he says, "the Scriptures are the words of God," and as such could not but be infallible. That he himself and other believers were inspired by the same Spirit which inspired Apostles and Prophets was the very basis of his faith; and this Spirit he repeatedly asserts, is infallible. Logically, Fox ought to have placed his own writings on a level with the Holy Scriptures, or rather to have claimed superiority for them; because his writings were originals, while the Scriptures we possess are only remote copies. There is, however, no symptom of desire, either to displace the Bible, or to supplement it. Yet we do not meet with any acknowledgment of the inferiority of his own writings. Frequently he makes use of the formula, "this is the word of the Lord." In one instance he seems deliberately to call attention to the similarity between his epistles and those contained in the New Testament. "And now, friends, the Apostle John writes a general epistle to the church of Christ, as I do to you, the church of Christ. Now ye have an unction from the Holy One, and by it ye know all things."² Nevertheless if stress were laid upon this unusual case it would convey a false impression. Practically the Bible was as much to Fox as

¹ *Great Meeting*, page 476.

² *Doctrinal Works*, Vol. III., page 211.

to the most biblical of Protestants. It was the food of his own spiritual life; it was the great source of his arguments, appeals, instructions. If it were not that he himself distinctly declares the contrary, the reader would infer from the use he makes of it that he regarded the Bible as the highest revelation, the supreme authority. But with him the Light within, the divine teacher, the Spirit of God, was the great revealer, the authority above all other, whether Church or Book. Even in regard to the Holy Scriptures he protested against the popular faith in their mere letter; and it would have been inconsistency to have claimed inspiration for his own writings, as writings. He believed that he was inspired, that he came to the people with the word of the Lord in his heart; and whether he conveyed it by the lips or by the pen, it was the same inspired message. If he was totally unconscious of writing "scriptures" in the technical sense, so were, as far as we can judge, the writers of the Bible. The Koran and the Book of Mormon were artificially composed with the deliberate intent of securing the authority of divine revelation. But David and Isaiah, Paul and John, wrote psalms and prophecies and epistles, as simply and naturally as they delivered their spoken messages. The New Testament seems quite unconscious that it is preparing itself to be bound up in one volume with the Old. At least we may say this of George Fox that he quotes the whole Bible as inspired, just as the New Testament writers quote the Hebrew Scriptures, and that he is entirely unconscious of a design to write an appendix to them. The Quakers of his own generation had no temptation to exalt his

writings, for they enjoyed the same inspiration ; and no one who has plodded through his three thousand pages will be surprised that succeeding generations allowed most of them to fall into complete oblivion.

In his use of the Bible Fox displayed as much inconsistency as the most confirmed Biblicalist. Vehement as were his protests against bondage to the letter, he could be as slavishly literal as any man. At times he argues upon the principle that everything for which a text cannot be quoted is wrong. He asks, whether in primitive times Christians used to set up dancing-schools and fencing-schools ? He demands Scripture for stage-plays and shows, for bull-baiting, and cock-fighting, nine-pins and bowls, for football, wrestling and music :¹ grouping together brutal and innocent amusements. Art is banished from the home and shop, as well as from the meeting-house. "All friends, and people, pluck down your images, your likenesses, your pictures, your representations of things in heaven, things on the earth, and things in the water : I say, pluck them out of your houses, walls, or signs, or other places."² Literalism here is pushed to its extreme ; but it was not Fox's manner to do things by halves. He read in the Epistle of James, "if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin," and forthwith bowing, doffing the hat, and other customary tokens of respect are at all cost to be abandoned. There is nothing in the extremes and excesses of early quakerism for which Scripture precepts or precedents were not quoted. If one part of the New Testament more than another was constantly in Fox's mind, it was the Sermon

¹ *Doctrinal Works*, Vol. I, p. 316.

² *Ibid*, Vol. I, page 367.

on the Mount. Two of its precepts, interpreted literally, have been almost the peculiar property of the quaker society: "swear not at all": "resist not evil." Another precept of the same sermon, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," he seldom mentioned, and the Quakers were left to interpret it as they would. Fox could not only neglect a passage of Scripture, but on the strength of one, could contradict another. "Freely ye have received, freely give" condemned all ministers who took stipends. "The labourer is worthy of his hire," was not allowed to justify them. Fox could go farther than this: and openly set aside distinct injunctions of Holy Writ: of which that forbidding women to speak in the church, and the precepts in respect to baptism and the Lord's Supper are the most notable instances.

Another sign of the dominion the Scriptures exercised over Fox's mind is his marked aversion to terms and phrases which he did not meet with in the Bible. He shows this not only in refusing the use of theological terms, such as the Trinity, which have been disliked by many: but apparently quite innocent phrases are included in this condemnation. "Moral law," is a phrase he will not allow to pass unchallenged.¹ There is no scripture for it. Again, "the written word" cannot be permitted. An objection several times repeated, to speaking of Christ's "human body,"² seems to have had a deeper spring than the objection to an unscriptural phrase: though it is not clear what Fox is aiming at. "And Joseph of Arimathæa went to Pilate and asked him for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph did not call it

¹ *Great Mystery*, page 398.

² *Ibid*, page 180.

the human body of Jesus, or give it such a name, as may be seen in the Evangelists, and nowhere did they give him such names as human body, or humanity, which names ye have added to him more than the Scriptures do. . . . The Apostle saith, ‘he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh his own damnation, because he discerns not the Lord’s body.’ Now, what say ye to this, ye that call his body human? may not every unworthy eater see and discern that which is human?” Christ, he reminds his readers, is called a spiritual rock before he was born of a virgin; and he is the second man, the Lord from heaven. “And is the first man human, and the second man the Lord from heaven, human also? Will ye give them both the name human? Where had ye such words to call the second man withal? not from the Scriptures, for they give him no such by-names.”¹ One suspects a leaning to docetism at this time; but not the docetism which was based on the notion of the sinfulness of matter: Fox certainly accepted the historical incarnation in its literal sense; but to him the corporeal existence of Jesus Christ on the earth was only an embodiment of an eternal spiritual existence. The notion that Christ is now in heaven with a natural and carnal body, he repudiates as worthy only of the grossest sort. “And Christ Jesus is not known as he is God, in his divinity; nor in his flesh, as he was manifest: but by this his divine heavenly light, which we own and believe in as he commands, who are children of the light: which name or title Christ bestowed on us, before you professors nicknamed us by the name of Quakers in the year 1650, which name one

¹ *Doctrinal Writings*, Vol. II., pp. 151, 152, 154.

Bennet of Derby gave us, when he cast us into prison.”¹ How do *we* know Christ? Not in his divinity; for God is incomprehensible by the finite creature: not as he was at Nazareth and in Jerusalem; for that is remote history, of which we only hear from others. But *we* know Him, as the Light of God shining in our hearts, the Eternal life which existed before the history, and exists still, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. This seems to be Fox’s view; the point of contact between the human soul and God is not in ancient history, but in present experience, in Christ who is the Light. It is not that he denies or overlooks the historical truth. All the gospel story he accepted and believed, in simplicity and sincerity: but he could not rest in that as mere fact; he must look through the fact to the spirit inside of it. Fox’s mental habit was at the very antipodes of Muggleton’s. That “grossest sort of professor” seemed incapable of a purely spiritual conception. Even “God is a spirit” was unsatisfactory to his mind, and to be real to him, God must have bodily form and substance. Fox on the contrary while he heartily accepts the incarnation as a fact, must always remember that there is a meaning in it: and the meaning, the Light within, is more precious than the fact. Fox, as it were, abides always on the Mount of Transfiguration: sees the Lord through all his story from the manger to the cross, not in the common light of our dim earthly day, but with the Divine Light shining through the earthly vesture; so that the merely temporal and historical seems lost to his sight in the overpowering radiance of the Eternal Love.

These latter quotations are taken from his “Testimony

¹ *Ibid*, page 199.

of what we believe of Christ," written by Fox in Worcester prison in 1675. He was released in that year, and this was the last of his imprisonments, but he came out so much weakened, that it was long before he recovered his natural strength again, if he did ever fully recover it. Fifteen more years were allotted to him, years of undiminished fervour, unremitting labour; and then his work was done. The latter years of Fox's life differed markedly from the commencement of his public work. The change came gradually. No precise dividing line can be discerned, nor can the causes of the change be certainly indicated: but I am disposed to regard the restoration of Charles II. as the beginning of the second chapter of quakerism. During the Civil war, and under the Commonwealth, men's minds were heated to boiling point, and society was convulsed by the violence of its own emotions. Amid the various forces which contended for the mastery, religion was the strongest. Differing in their creeds, differing in their methods, the wisest, best, and strongest men were all agreed that religion is the first duty of man, the first concern of a people, and nearly all of them agreed that its regulation and support should be the first business of the government. This period of general excitement, and eager desire for the right settlement of religion, was Fox's opportunity, when his message came as a trumpet-call and thousands rallied round the standard of Christ the Light. But while he was calling all to the new reformation the Puritans appealed to the sword, and in their military triumph, monarchy, prelacy, parliaments, civil liberty itself, were overthrown. Then came the confusion. The majority abandoned in despair the at-

tempt to place national affairs, civil and religious, on the basis of reason, justice and truth. Charles II. was enthroned, the old constitution was restored, and the dissatisfied minority sternly repressed. The Quakers felt the influence of the general change. They no longer claimed the right to prophesy in parish churches. No longer can Fox record in his Journal conversions of colonels and justices of the peace; of clergymen and dissenting ministers who forsook benefice and stipend, to follow him in preaching a free gospel. During this closing period of his life quakerism reached its high-water mark: then, or soon after the ebbing tide began. Already quakerism was assuming the aspect of a sect. Not that Fox ever acknowledged, or appeared conscious of this. To him all Christendom was in the apostacy: his mission was the revival of primitive Christianity; and in the end all the churches and sects must embrace his reformation. In this conviction he never wavered. The really great success of his labours might well confirm this expectation in the breast of one who remembered the solitary struggles of thirty years before, when he passed his days in the woods, reading his Bible in a hollow tree, and spent the nights in lonely wanderings, darkness around and darkness within his soul. Then light broke in upon his spirit, and he issued forth, to assail venerated superstitions and inbred prejudices, at first absolutely without friend or helper. But now England was covered with quaker meetings, and the new Church had spread far both in Europe and America. The tree was young and strong, green and fruitful; promising to gather the nations under its shadow, and fill the whole earth. Yet there was a change, perceptible

to us, if not to him. The very success achieved was in some respects a hindrance to further progress. The discipline was generally adopted; but to the last Fox and the other preachers had to fight against "disorderly spirits." Their time and strength were diverted from aggressive preaching, to the care of their own numerous congregations. More and more, quakerism was shrinking to the dimensions of a small separated society.

A change too had come over the spirit of the society. The impetuosity of youth was passed, and it was settling down into the sobriety of middle age. The flaming zeal which burst into the churches, and carried the glad tidings through fairs and markets was cooling down. Signs and prophecies became rare, and ceased. Conspicuously staunch to their convictions, the repeated storms of persecution which burst over all nonconformists, spent their chief fury upon them; but its blasts were strengthening, not destructive. At the same time with persecution, another more insidious foe was assailing their piety, the seductive influence of prosperity. The Quakers were growing rich, and wealth was bringing back conformity to the world. The missionary zeal which moved John Stubs and Henry Fell to embark on the long and perilous journey to China; and brought Mary Fisher into the presence of Sultan Mahomet at Adrianople, cooled down as the society grew wealthier.

Time brought its inevitable changes to Fox himself. He was no longer the gaunt, half-starved youth, whose lean frame seemed almost insensible to hunger, fatigue, and blow; but a large, stout, heavy man, of serene countenance and sedate demeanour, feeling the impera-

tive need of husbanding a limited amount of bodily strength. But his eye was still bright, his voice clear, and his spirit, if sobered by years, still glowed with a holy flame of faith and love, not less intense, if steadier and less fitful than before. Old and weak, with strength impaired by long and cruel imprisonments, he twice undertook arduous missionary journeys on the continent. Penn, Barclay, Keith and others, accompanied him on the first occasion. In those days travelling was difficult, fatiguing and dangerous. Inns were poor, roads bad; walled towns closed their gates at night-fall. Often the travellers spent the days in open waggons or boats, with rain pouring down; and umbrellas were unknown in Europe at that time. They had at times to pass the night on straw, lying down in their wet clothes. Yet Fox plodded on uncomplainingly, for three months, through Holland and part of Germany. There was plenty of work for him to do. The yearly meeting held in Amsterdam represented Friends in all the United Provinces of Holland, in Embden, the Palatinate, Hamburg, Frederickstadt, Dantzic, and "other places in and about Germany." So wide an extension implies considerable missionary zeal among the Quakers, but nevertheless there is no record of any later effort proportionate to that memorable exodus of the sixty ministers from the north of England in 1654; nor do the quieter labours of Crisp, Mead, Whitehead and the second generation of Quaker preachers exhibit the fervid enthusiasm, and marvellous powers, of Burroughs and Parnel, Camm and Howgill.

Fox was strong and hopeful to the end. There were perilous days in the closing period of Charles the Second's

reign, when the meeting-house doors were nailed up by the magistrates, and the Friends could only assemble in the open streets. Dauntless as ever, Fox hastened to the post of danger, and exposed himself to the brunt of the attack. But he escaped imprisonment. Fifteen or sixteen hundred Quakers were released by the Act of Indulgence of James II. Then came the abdication, the coronation of William and Mary, and the inauguration of a new era of religious liberty which Fox saw but did not understand. Accustomed to persecution all his life, the cessation would seem to him a mere lull in the tempest: but it was in truth the commencement of that age of perfect religious toleration, for which he had all his life contended, and which was henceforth to be gradually but surely established. Fox could not foresee this, nor that with the absence of persecution, the life of quakerism would die away. He closed his eyes on the scene when the Children of the Light were still numerous, and for the most part faithful. In the year before his death he wrote to the Quakers in Barbadoes: "My desires are that ye may live and walk in the peaceable truth of God, and shew forth that ye are the children of the light, and of the truth; for the heavenly, gentle, and peaceable wisdom is justified by her children. . . . Therefore love one another, for love is of God and hatred is of the devil, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knows God. . . . So it is not every one that talks of the light, and talks of the word, and of righteousness, and talks of Christ, and of God, but he that doth the will of God. And therefore, my friends, all strive to excel one another in love, and in virtue, and in good life and conversation; and strive all to be of one mind, heart, and

judgment in the Spirit of God ; for in Christ all are one, and are in peace in Him.”¹ This was the faith, this the spirit in which the last months were spent. From this time Fox stayed in London and its neighbourhood, going “from meeting to meeting, labouring diligently in the work of the Lord, and opening the divine mysteries of the heavenly things, as God by His Spirit opened them in me.” As he laboured among them, the signs of a growing laxity and worldliness oppressed his spirit, and moved him to write a solemn warning to the young people against vanity and the fashions of the world, and to the old against “growing downwards, and raking after the earth.”² It was a reminiscence of his first call nearly fifty years before, when the divine voice said to him : “Thou seest how young people go together into vanity, and old people into the earth, and thou must forsake all, both young and old, and keep out of all, and be as a stranger unto all.” He did forsake all ; until the word of the Lord came to him, and he returned to summon a chosen people, the young from their vanity, the old from their covetousness, and to lead them into the light and truth and joy of the kingdom of heaven. It is the oft-told story : the sadder for its frequency. The prophet comes with his divine message, and gathers out a selected company, who for a time walk in its spirit and power : then the world creeps in, faith grows dim, and the second or third generation shows the army of the Lord a mixed multitude, the hearts of many of whom are ever for turning back to Egypt.

In faithful epistles, in faithful addresses, Fox spent

¹ *Journal*, Vol. II., page 414.

² *Ibid*, page 417.

the months and weeks. In London on the 10th of the eleventh month, 1690, he wrote his last letter to the Friends in Ireland, closing thus:—"And Christ, the seed, reigns, and his power is over all; who bruises the serpent's head, and destroys the devil and his works, and was before he was. And so all of you live and walk in Christ Jesus; so that nothing may be between you and God, but Christ, in whom ye have salvation, life, rest, and peace with God.

"As for the passages of truth in this land and abroad, I do hear that in Holland and Germany, and thereaways, friends are in love, unity, and peace: and in Jamaica, Barbadoes, Nevis, Antego, Maryland, and New England, I hear nothing but friends are in unity and peace. The Lord preserve them all out of the world (in which there is trouble) in Christ Jesus, in whom there is peace, life, love, and unity. Amen. So my love in the Lord Jesus Christ to all friends everywhere in your land, as though I named them. G.F."¹

The next day, being the first day of the week, he preached in the meeting at Gracechurch Street: as he left the meeting he felt the cold strike at his heart, but he said, "I am glad I was here; now I am clear, I am fully clear." Two days after he peacefully fell asleep. His last recorded words were, "All is well. The seed of God reigns over all, and over death itself. And though (said he) I am weak in body, yet the power of God is over all, and the seed reigns over all disorderly spirits." "Thus ended he his days in his faithful testimony, in perfect love and unity with his brethren, and in peace

¹ *Journal*, Vol. II., page 429.

and goodwill to all men, on the 13th day of the eleventh month, 1690, being then in the 67th year of his age.”¹

¹ *Ibid*, page 430.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DECAY OF QUAKERISM.

THE death of George Fox closes the heroic age of quakerism; henceforth is a melancholy story of decay. When their message had, to all appearance, been finally and hopelessly rejected by the churches, the Children of the Light themselves unconsciously ceased to believe in it. There was no acknowledged change in doctrine, nor in tactics, but practically they regarded themselves no longer as God's prophets commissioned to recall apostate Christendom to primitive Christianity; and withdrew to nourish a separate spiritual life in the quiet of their retired meetings. They ceased to be pioneers of a general reformation, and became a sect among other sects. For a time they flourished, the most powerful of the nonconforming sects, but their glory was taken from them, their strength declined, and lethargy set in. The sceptical reaction which in the first half of the eighteenth century succeeded to the hot fevers of religious excitement of George Fox's era, affected them in common with all the churches. Unlike the other churches, they did not renew their strength after the great revival initiated by the Methodists. Their decline continued in spite of the stirrings of new life all around. The story of decay is unattractive, and modern writers

on quakerism rarely care to trace its course. If it were our object to search for the startling, the picturesque, the interesting, we might fall in with the general example, and close our study at this point. But our purpose is not to amuse ourselves, but to discover truth. We want to know whether God did reveal anything to these despised Quakers, and if so, what that was. As in the estimation of spiritual truth, its power to live and propagate itself is an important element, this period of declension cannot be overlooked. Let us try to condense the history into a brief compass by taking a rapid survey of its whole course; and then single out some particulars for ampler notice.

During the first quarter of the eighteenth century, quakerism appeared to be in a flourishing state. If the first love and zeal had somewhat cooled even during its founder's lifetime, there was no perceptible decline in numbers nor in prosperity for many years after his decease. Sewel, writing their history in the early years of the century, calls them "a great people," and has no suspicion of their decay. In 1725 Thomas Chalkley thought that they were still an increasing people. He may have mistaken progress in one or two localities for general growth, but it is clear that he was not aware that the ebb tide had set in. Soon after, complaints of declension, both in spirit and in numbers, become frequent. It will be pretty near the truth to say that quakerism had one generation of prosperity after George Fox's death, that is from 1690 to 1720. During this period the society was numerous, strong, and might not unreasonably hope for the eventual triumph of its principles. At that time the other churches could not

but regard it as an important factor in the religious condition of the nation. In order to measure the subsequent descent it is necessary to ascertain as nearly as possible the height to which quakerism attained. No census of their numbers was taken, but two estimates have come down to us from independent sources, neither of them prejudiced in favour of the sect. One of these is found in "The Snake in the Grass," an attack upon quakerism quite in the style of Bunyan, Faldo, and Roger Williams, by the Rev. Charles Leslie, a non-juring clergyman, author of the "Short and Easy Method with the Deists," and numerous other works. He says there were a hundred thousand Quakers in England. Another estimate was obtained as the result of an inquiry undertaken at the desire of King William III. who wished to ascertain the proportions of Churchmen, Dissenters, and Papists, in the Kingdom; and this set the Quakers down at fifty thousand, about one half of the total number of the nonconformists. The Quaker author, to whom we owe this information, thinks that Leslie wished to alarm the public, and may have overestimated; while King William's return probably desired to magnify the national Church. He himself supposes that there were about sixty thousand in England and Wales, at the time of Fox's death.¹ If to these we add the large numbers in Ireland and Scotland, perhaps Leslie's figure would not be too high for the culmination of the sect in the United Kingdom. Another quaker authority states that in 1678 the Friends numbered ten thousand in London alone.² In

¹ *Quakerism Past and Present*, by J. S. Rowntree, pp. 69-72.

² *The London Friends' Meetings*. By W. Beck and T. F. Ball, page 32.

1660 there were at one time more than four thousand Quakers in prison.¹ We shall probably not be far wrong if we assume that the quaker population of the three Kingdoms reached the number of one hundred thousand when it was at its highest; and this was not far from the year 1700. In 1800 they were twenty thousand, and at present they number only fifteen thousand. This diminution is alarming enough to threaten a not-distant extinction of the sect. But the figures alone by no means adequately represent the decline of the Children of Light; to appreciate aright their former importance and their present insignificance, the great increase of population must be taken into account. If the Quakers had gained no new converts from outside but had retained their own children within their sect, increasing thus with the natural increase of the population, they who were one hundred thousand in 1700 out of a total population of five millions, would be seven hundred thousand now, out of thirty-five millions. Even if we adopt the lowest estimate of the time of their prosperity, they should number now three hundred and fifty thousand, instead of fifteen thousand. Again, in King William's estimate they are considered to be one half of the nonconformists, that is, equal in numbers to the Independents, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Roman Catholics, all added together. In our day, instead of being the largest dissenting body, equal to all the rest, they are not one hundredth part of the non-conformist total. Such is the contrast in this country. Looking abroad, we see that on the Continent quakerism is all but extinct. In America only, the case is some-

¹ Rowntree, page 72.

what less doleful. There the Friends number about one hundred and fifty thousand, and this is perhaps as high a number as they at any time reached.¹ But this comparative prosperity shrinks into an almost hopeless decadence when looked at by the side of the immense increase of population in the States.

There is no need to emphasize the present low estate of the society of Friends. They are themselves painfully sensible of it. But it is necessary to lay stress upon the fact that they did at one time occupy a high place among the religious bodies, and bid fair to accomplish a general reformation of all; for this prosperous estate lasted for so short a time, that the fact is unknown except to a few who have made a study of their history, and even after patient study, and with all the evidence before one's mind, it is still difficult to realise that the Quakers at one time swarmed in the land, seriously alarming the older churches by their rapid progress. So it was, however, and it is important to bear in mind that our problem is, not to explain how the Quakers attracted a few minds of a peculiar temperament; but why, having at one time found wide acceptance among Christians, and having aimed at universal sway, they fell again into oblivion, and became the feeble folk we now see. Once they were mighty in work, strong to suffer, heroic in endurance; their fame filled the earth, and they grew to be as Sewel says, a great people. As such we must picture them to ourselves during the earlier years of the last century. If quakerism had always been what it is now, with insignificant and inappreciable spiritual force, its history would hardly be worth studying.

¹ *An American View of the Causes of the Decline*. 1860.

When George Fox from his dying bed mentally surveyed the quaker societies, he saw love, unity, and peace prevailing everywhere, the power of God over all, the seed of God reigning over all disorderly spirits. Many a sore conflict with these "disorderly spirits" he had in his time, and his hard-won victories had not been gained without heavy losses; but his death-bed was cheered by the thought that doctrine and discipline were securely established throughout the new church. He did not foresee that fresh trouble would spring up almost immediately, and that the leader of another formidable schism would be one of his ablest and most esteemed adherents, his wife's son-in-law, George Keith. This strange chapter in the history is so instructive that it must be separately told. The controversy lasted several years, and was carried on with painful acrimony on both sides. After Keith's defection, or ejection, the society had a long season of peace. One by one the ancient leaders, men who had been Fox's disciples and companions in labour, Penn, Ellwood, Latcy, Whitehead, and others were called to their rest. Among these, George Whitehead, whose connection with quakerism dated from its commencement in the north, and who was one of the sixty ministers who started from the north in 1654, by his age, his consistent character, and eminent services, approached nearest to the position of successor to George Fox. At eighteen years of age he was the Quaker apostle of Norfolk, and through all the fiery trial of the first generation he bore his full share of labour and of suffering. His comrades Parnel, Burroughs, Howgill, Hubberthorn, and many more, succumbed to the rigours of imprisonment; but he survived to the venerable age of 87, and fulfilled 68

years of ministry. When they buried him in Bunhill Fields, in 1722-3, the Quakers lost the last link which connected them with the birth-time of their society.

After his death the paucity of materials for history is one sign of the stagnation of quakerism. A few books of no intrinsic importance were written against it, to which the Quakers issued equally unimportant replies. Ministers there were, who travelled from meeting to meeting, but with rare exceptions they did not attempt to convert the outside world. Their journals are jeremiads. In place of the trumpet-toned triumphings of Fox, Burroughs, and the first prophets, or the sober confidence of Penn, Barclay, and the second generation, their pages are filled with lamentation over the visible decadence of the Quaker Church. "Strenuous exertions were no doubt made by the faithful leaders and teachers of the Church to stem the advancing tide of declension. But whilst membership was undefined the task was found impossible. For more than half a century matters grew gradually worse, till the churches began to make out definite lists of their members (in accordance with the Rules of Settlement, Yearly Meeting, 1737), and active measures were subsequently taken to purify the camp. The settlement of membership in itself dissevered many who had hitherto been looked upon as Quakers; and out of those who were registered as Church members, many more were afterwards disowned by the Six London Meetings for their disorderly conduct."¹ By this stringent discipline, applied with increased vigour and determination after 1760, the society was purged of inconsistent and immoral members. The dissolute and dishonest were

¹ *The London Friends' Meetings*, page 122.

excommunicated, and many shared the same fate whose only fault was disobedience to quaker tenets. Those who paid tithes, those who were married by a priest, were excluded as ruthlessly as the drunkard and the fraudulent bankrupt. Birthright membership was the rule of the society, as it is to this day. The children of Quakers were registered as members of the Church without requiring from them any profession of faith. There was no very eager desire to add new members by proselytism from other churches, or by conversion from the world. Thus the quaker society gradually crystallised into its present form, hardly a Christian Church in the sense of that word as understood by Christians generally, but a clan or corporation, partly religious, partly social, partly civil, consisting of converted and unconverted persons, bound together by family relationship, and looking suspiciously on the infusion of new blood.¹

The spectacle of the Quaker Church in its decay watching the youth and growth of Methodism is an affecting one. It was less than a century since George Fox raised that potent cry in Nottingham church; not fifty years had passed since the great Quaker leader was carried to his grave; his followers still numbered tens of thousands; and their meeting houses studded the country; they were wealthy and influential, the days of obloquy and persecution long left behind. But while they enjoyed peace and prosperity, the country seemed to be sinking fast into practical heathenism. Deism was spreading among the upper classes, and the lower were given over to ignorance and immorality. In this age of increasing darkness, where was the Light of the Quakers? It had

¹ *Quakerism, Past and Present*, page 112.

gone out altogether, or was hidden under the bushel of their meeting-houses. The voice which thundered in the market-place, denouncing the judgments of God against dishonesty and vice, was heard no more. No Child of the Light gathered thousands around him on hill-side or common, to listen to the blessed tidings of a present Christ, not far from any one of us, bringing salvation to the broken and contrite in heart. Suddenly a new voice was heard in the land. The silence and the darkness of death was broken by a little band of Oxford students, clergymen of the Established Church. God rebuked these degenerate Quakers with a divine irony. The first revelation that George Fox received was that "being bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ, and he stranged at it." Now God showed the Quakers that being bred at Oxford was not enough to disqualify men from being chosen messengers of salvation. To protest against the hireling clergy, the priests of Baal, was among the foremost of quaker principles. Now these "priests of Baal" enacted the part which Fox and Houghll, and Whitehead, and the other quaker preachers enacted a century before. George Whitfield swayed the London populace by his eloquence on Moorfields, just as Edward Burroughs had swayed them in the same place. John Wesley preached at Bristol, until the people cried aloud, were struck down, were seized with violent trembling. The Methodist preachers filled the land with their fame; upon them the hostility of the clergy and upper classes, and the blind cruel fury of the mob were wreaked, as upon the Children of the Light in the by-gone days. Everywhere Methodist societies

were gathered, Methodist chapels were reared, and in thirty or forty years John Wesley accomplished a work, and attained a position, almost exactly analogous to that of his predecessor, George Fox. Meantime where were the followers of George Fox? They stood on one side and watched this mighty work of God. Some of them criticised and condemned: some of them owned the Divine Hand, and blessed the new prophet. Now and again John Wesley held sweet and loving intercourse with some of the Friends; although he frankly condemned the tenets and the practice of the sect. He writes in his Journal, June 15, 1739; "I had much talk with one who is called a Quaker, but he could not receive my saying. I was too strict for him, and talked of such a perfection, as he could not think necessary." At Launceston, Sept. 22, 1743, some persons stopped him in the street. "Before we had spoken many words, our souls took acquaintance with each other. I found they were called Quakers, but that hurt not me, seeing the love of God was in their hearts." On another occasion, "I breakfasted with one of the most lovely old men I ever saw, John Garret, a Dutchman by birth, and a speaker among the Quakers." They came to hear him preach, and there are several entries in his Journal of Quakers receiving baptism. Once at least one of Wesley's preachers left him, and joined the Quakers. But on the whole the attitude of the Quakers towards Methodism was that of mere spectators. They wondered, they could not but own the power of God, yet they did not altogether approve; they did not help; they were not stirred up to emulation. When Wesley was preaching at Bristol, penitents were falling down,

groaning, and crying aloud, and rising up to give praise for their deliverance. "A Quaker who stood by was not a little displeased at the dissimulation of these creatures; and was biting his lips and knitting his brows: when he dropped down as thunderstruck. The agony he was in was even terrible to behold. We besought God not to lay folly to his charge. And he soon lifted up his head, and cried aloud, 'Now I know that thou art a prophet of the Lord.'" That Quaker was a representative. So we can imagine the majority of his sect, looking on with puzzled brow, marvelling at the sight of poor sinners trembling and quaking, when the Methodists preached temperance, righteousness and judgment to come. The Quakers of that generation had never seen anything like it, and could hardly believe that it was genuine. In the long run they could not but own that the Wesleys and Whitfield had been raised up to do a great work; but they did not as a body receive that renewed baptism of the Holy Spirit which came upon other churches; unless we see a sign of this, in their increase of zeal for internal purity which began in 1760, and continued for twenty-one years, a disciplinary visitation of their meetings; until at least an external reformation was thoroughly accomplished.

The glory of later quakerism is its philanthropy. They had from the first been conspicuous for their devotion to practical Christianity, and even in their low estate, brotherly-kindness and charity to the poor were a tradition from their early days. In the second half of the last century this philanthropic spirit began to bud forth in new blossoms, and to extend its

fragrance and fruitfulness beyond the bounds of sect, and nation. This first appeared in the anti-slavery movement, of the origin of which something will be said in connection with the name of John Woolman, a movement which it is a singular pleasure to think upon, a lasting honour to the Quakers, which has deservedly earned for them the admiration and love of the whole Christian Church. Yes. While we faithfully and unflinchingly pourtray the spiritual decadence of the Children of Light, let us all the more delight to contemplate the lesser yet heavenly radiance of a true human charity, which began to shine upon the enslaved African, and has continued ever since to shed its gentle healing rays upon the poor, the sick, the prisoner, the ignorant, the oppressed, of every colour, and in all continents. If the Quakers long ago abdicated their function of spiritual leaders and teachers, they have since nobly aspired to take the lead in all good deeds of human benevolence. Theirs is the true religion of humanity, based upon, not hostile to the religion of Christ. Happily they have now imitators and rivals in all Christian churches, yet none will grudge to acknowledge the debt due to them for their early example of zeal, self-denial, and generosity in philanthropic labours.

After the expulsion of George Keith in 1695, the Quakers had more than a hundred years of freedom from internal dissension. Though the sect was steadily dwindling away, though it was hastening its own extinction by remorselessly excommunicating those who committed the unpardonable sin of getting married in the parish church, the ancient doctrine and discipline

provoked no murmur of dissent or opposition. There was not life enough to support a rebellion. It was not until after the French Revolution, in the wide-spread agitation of human thought which followed that great convulsion, that signs of mental activity appeared, in an attack, first upon the discipline of the society, then upon the ancient faith of the Friends, led by Abraham Shackleton in Ireland, and supported by Hannah Barnard, a travelling minister from America, who arrived in Ireland in 1798.¹ The opinions of Shackleton were a severe shock to the quaker fraternity. In the name of the Light within, he depreciated the Holy Scriptures, denied their infallibility and the deity of our Lord. He was disowned in 1801, and many others who sympathized with his views shared the same fate. The next year Hannah Barnard, accused of unitarianism, and unsound opinions about the Bible, was disowned in London, and on her return to America was excommunicated by her own Meeting. In 1812, Thomas Foster, of London, after a stubborn defence, was disowned for unitarianism. This appears to have been the last lingering echo of Hannah Barnard's influence. The next great schism, the most formidable secession the society ever experienced, was led by Elias Hicks in America. This event brings us down to modern times, when we see the old quaker society split up into three distinct bodies, all claiming to be the true descendants of George Fox, and the primitive Quakers. These three parties will have to be studied in the persons of their leaders, Elias Hicks, Joseph John Gurney, and John

¹ *The Society of Friends in the Nineteenth Century.* By William Harrison, vol. I, page 37, *et seq.*

Wilbur, the first of whom is accused of rationalism ; the second of having forsaken primitive quakerism for an evangelical doctrine hardly distinguishable from Wesleyanism ; and the third claims to have upheld the true *via media*, the good old doctrine, faithful both to the Light within, and the inspired volume. The attempt to adjudicate upon these charges and counter-charges will involve no slight labour, nor can we promise beforehand to satisfy our own minds, while we have the certain prospect of displeasing two out of the three parties, and the possibility of offending all. Nevertheless to this complex problem our inquiry has led us, and it must be faced humbly but fearlessly, in dependence upon the guidance of the Spirit of truth, and with a determination to follow whithersoever it leads. It may be that the time is now ripe for discerning the true merits of past controversies ; or if not so, at least we may hope that, sincerely seeking the truth in the light which is given to us, and depending solely upon the help that cometh from above, our progress shall be in the right direction toward the more perfect truth yet to be revealed in God's good time.

CHAPTER XIV.

GEORGE KEITH.

GEORGE KEITH, a Scotchman, was in 1661 a student at Aberdeen, and a leader in the Quaker Church there. Bishop Burnet, who was his fellow-student, writes of him: "he was esteemed the most learned man that ever was in that sect; he was well versed both in the oriental tongues, in philosophy and mathematics."¹ The year of his birth is not recorded, but probably he was still a lad of about eighteen or twenty, when he first joined the Quakers. Parnel, Whitehead, and other famous ministers were more prominent than he at a like early age. If we suppose him twenty-one in 1664, then he was seventy when he died, a clergyman of the Church of England, in 1713. For thirty years in the front rank of the army of quakerism, during the last twenty years of his life its most damaging opponent, the story of this man's life at first sight is inexplicable; but if upon careful examination, the mystery vanishes, his case may furnish the key wherewith to explain the whole riddle of quakerism.

George Fox visited Scotland in 1657. His account of his labours there is one of the most spirit stirring chapters in his Journal, which it is refreshing to read, after our depressing retrospect of quaker decrepitude. Ten

¹ *Burnet's History of His own Time*: Vol. IV., p. 446.

years of toil, triumph, and suffering, had made Fox a veteran in the holy war, confident of victory, with a burning enthusiasm in his soul. "When first I set my horse's feet upon the Scottish ground," he says, "I felt the seed of God to sparkle about me, like innumerable sparks of fire."¹ For some weeks he rode from city to city, turning many "to the Lord Jesus Christ, their Saviour and Teacher, whose blood was shed for them." Well for him was it that Cromwell conquered at Dunbar; otherwise the stern disciples of Calvin and Knox would assuredly have cut his journey short, by imprisonment, if not by death. As it was they moved Cromwell's military Council to order his expulsion, but Fox openly defied the order; and it was not enforced. The colonels, captains, and soldiery were frequently among his hearers, and doubtless he met with more sympathy among them than among the natives. Fox boldly assailed the Calvinistic doctrines of election and reprobation, charging the priests with teaching that "God had ordained the greatest part of men and women for hell," which they did; and that "the fault was not at all in the creature, less or more, but God has ordained it so," which assuredly was not their doctrine, although the popular mind must have found it difficult to refrain from the inference. But Fox had his own doctrine of election, clear and sharp, and propounded it with the full confidence of inspiration. "Now, all that believe in the Light of Christ, as He commands, are in the election; but such as hate the Light are in the condemnation."² How the presbyterian preachers raged against this

¹ *Journal*, I. 416.

² *Journal*, I. 403.

audacious heretic ! Unable to stop his mouth by physical force, they gathered in synod or convocation, and drew up a commination to be read in all their churches. "Cursed is he that saith, every man hath a Light within him, sufficient to lead him to salvation : and let all the people say, Amen. Cursed is he that saith, faith is without sin : and let all the people say, Amen. Cursed is he that denieth the Sabbath-day : and let all the people say, Amen ;"¹ and so on. This was the Scotland into which George Fox introduced his gospel of the inner Light, of the supremacy of the Spirit, of the uselessness of all forms, and of the duty of universal toleration. If we have to single out one factor which was especially responsible for the failure of England's struggle for civil and religious liberty in the seventeenth century, it was Scotch presbyterianism, the stubborn intolerance of the men who signed the Covenant with their blood, and compelled Charles II. to sign it against his conscience. Men like the saintly Rutherford strengthened the Westminster Assembly in that blind hatred of toleration, in that fixed resolve to coerce consciences, which rendered parliamentary government impossible, necessitated the military despotism, and brought back the tyranny and licentiousness of the Stuarts. These were the men who thundered curses upon the Children of the Light from a thousand pulpits. If quakerism could take root among such men as these, its converts should have been true as steel, steadfast unto death. And such they were, the Barclays, the Jaffrays, and other members of the heroic band, but among them was he, who became the apostate Keith.

George Fox did not reach Aberdeen. Our earliest notice of Quakers in that city is in 1660, when we hear of a little company of Friends of truth, to whom the spirit of Alexander Jaffray was strongly drawn. Jaffray, born in 1614, was one of the leading men of Aberdeen. A gentleman, a scholar of the university, a man of property, and a soldier, he was Member of Parliament for, and Provost of the city. When, after Charles I. had been beheaded, Scotland sent four Commissioners to offer the crown to Charles II., on condition of his signing the Covenant, Jaffray was one, the others being Lords Brodie and Liberton, and the Earl of Cassilis. Jaffray fought at Dunbar, was wounded, and taken prisoner. Cromwell thought his captive worth encountering in another kind of battle. He, Fleetwood, and Dr. Owen set upon him with arguments to convince him of sinfulness in that matter of the Covenant. And they succeeded. This was the man who, when again on the losing side, a prisoner in the Tolbooth in 1660, felt his heart drawn to the despised Quakers, and resolved thus with himself:—"Whatever may be of mistake in the way and opinions of the people called Quakers, about the Light within them, as to the universality and operation of it; after some inquiry thereabout, my resolution is to waive the debatable part thereof, and as I may in the strength of the Lord, to improve and make use of what truth I find in the thing itself—to mind seriously and most closely to walk up to the Light in the conscience."¹ In this humble and cautious temper, he united himself to the persecuted fraternity, and four years later wrote down his conviction that "the power

¹ *Diary of Alexander Jaffray*, p. 149

and life of holiness is more truly known amongst them, and eminently held forth by them, than by any people else, that have come forth since the Apostle's days They dearly own, and rejoice in the use of the Holy Scriptures, and desire to live up to the practice of all the truths of God declared to them." This testimony to the character of the early Quakers from one of the foremost men in Scotland, negotiator with Charles II., captive and convert of Cromwell, whose knowledge of men was based upon a wide experience, is sufficient to clear them from the suspicion of having been merely ignorant and excited fanatics.

In this little band of eminently holy people, who loved their Bibles, and obeyed them, Robert Barclay and George Keith were prominent ministers. Keith was the first to appear in print, and Jallray's testimony was given in a preface to his book. This appeared in 1664. In that year Keith was in prison for ten months, and severely beaten. The next year he attempted to preach in the cathedral of Aberdeen, and was knocked to the ground. In 1670 he published "*The Light of Truth Triumphing*;" and in 1671 a book on "*Universal Grace*." In 1675 he and Robert Barclay disputed with some theological students of the university. Some time after this we find him in London, assisting George Whitehead in a controversy with the Baptists. The latter part of Keith's life was spent in England and America, at first in close association with George Fox, and with Penn and Barclay and their comrades. He became by his marriage with one of Margaret Fell's daughters a member of Fox's family circle. In 1677 he accompanied Fox in his continental tour, and was William Penn's associate

in the discussion with Galenus Abrahams. At some time, now or earlier, he entertained the opinion of one Van Helmont, that there is a transmigration of human souls, but he himself explains that it was only as an hypothesis, to meet the difficulty of the case of those who in their former life had never had the opportunity of hearing the Gospel. In 1682 he was imprisoned for refusing to take the oath, and again in 1684 he was confined in Newgate. In 1689 he journeyed in America. Thus quite up to the time of Fox's death, George Keith was a Quaker of the Quakers, nor do we detect anywhere a murmur of suspicion or dissatisfaction on either side. If Keith had died at this time, he would have been enshrined along with Barclay and Penn, as one of the saints and heroes of the best age of quakerism.

After Fox's death, Keith seems another man. Having been a zealous Friend for thirty years, having borne his full share in the sufferings of the time of persecution, he spent the last twenty years of his life, when quakerism was peaceful and prosperous, in gradually retracing his steps, until he ended by entering the Church of England, becoming a "hireling," a "priest of Baal," and a vehement antagonist of his life-long friends. Within two years of Fox's decease, he was at variance with his brethren. A quaker historian accuses him of self-importance, vain speculations, discontent with the quaker discipline. He revisited America in 1692, and speedily was involved in hot disputes with the preachers there, and the Governor of Pennsylvania. After months of acrimonious discussion, the majority disowned Keith, who, however, had a considerable following. His party called themselves Christian Quakers, and maintained a separate ex-

istence for some years. Returning to London in 1694, violent altercations with Whitehead, Penn, and Ellwood, terminated in Keith's expulsion. Here also a minority espoused Keith's views, with whom he established a separate meeting in 1695 ; still calling himself a Quaker. In 1701 he joined the Established Church, and was sent back to America as a missionary by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. There his former adherents would not receive him ; and he soon returned to England. In 1702 his reply to Barclay's Apology appeared. After this he was appointed to the benefice of Edberton in Sussex, where he made himself unpopular, it is said, by rigour in the collection of his tithes : he died in 1713, and is reported to have expressed regret on his death-bed.

The story comes to us through a strongly prejudiced source. That Keith exhibited infirmities of temper is probable enough, but it is not less probable that these infirmities were not confined to his side. The fact is, Keith's complete change of front was inexplicable to his former comrades, and they could only understand it on the hypothesis of self-conceit and disappointed ambition. It is only fair to Keith to say that there is no evidence for these charges. In his anti-quaker writings, his tone is moderate, frank in acknowledging his former errors, kindly towards his opponents. Harsh expressions disfigured the *vicà voce* discussions, but these were used by both sides ; and if fierce denunciations of heresy are enough to deprive a man of Christian character, it would be difficult to find any one in that age whose claim to be considered a Christian would stand. Certainly the early Quakers are no exception to the general rule.

Nevertheless, Keith's complete change of front is even now a startling and perplexing phenomenon ; and it is not surprising that his old friends were unable to regard it in an impartial light. At one time standing shoulder to shoulder with Robert Barclay against a hostile world ; at another fighting him foot to foot ; at first preaching the sufficiency of the Light within ; afterwards denouncing the doctrine as rank heathenism ; he seems to have renounced all that he formerly believed, and to have adopted all that he formerly rejected. No wonder that the Quakers deemed him a spiritual apostate. He is judged more mercifully in these days.¹ But modern quakerism has itself, though at a slower rate, passed through a Keithian transformation ; and therefore has less difficulty in being charitable.

To understand Keith's case, we must remember that quakerism was spiritual Christianity growing out of and flourishing upon the soil of Biblicalism. George Fox's teaching was a reaction from the literalism of the Puritans, a protest against the legal external view of Christ's redemption ; a reformation, not by denial, but by addition. Fox practically maintained the infallibility of the Scriptures as sincerely as any Puritan, and his faith in the person and work of the historic Christ was not less real, not less intense, than theirs. But he rescued himself from bondage to the letter by faith in the indwelling Spirit ; and the doctrine of Christ within, the universal saving Light, cleansing the soul from sin, changed redemption from an outward far-off legal transaction into an actual present salvation. Thus the old doctrine remained side by side with the new,

¹ *Life of George Fox*, by W. Tallack. p. 179.

and he was conscious of no inconsistency between them. Naturally he laid most stress upon the truths which had been neglected by the churches, and revealed anew to himself; and the more because these doctrines bring the truth closest home to the heart, and are immediately efficacious. In consequence, accusations of denying Christ and the Scriptures were hurled at his head; but he knew they were false, and disregarded them. If there was a want of coherence between the parts of the system, if it contained within itself the seeds of diverging developments, Fox was not conscious of this. Now let us try to realise the reception of quakerism by the little band of Aberdonians of whom Keith was one. It is plain from the statements of Jaffray's diary that some of them joined the fraternity without a full and unreserved acceptance of the doctrine of the inward Light. They were attracted, not by theological dogma, but by practical Christian life. In this little company of despised Quakers they found more Christian humility, purity, love, self-denial, martyrdom, than they could discern in the dominant presbyterianism. They had not the slightest thought of deposing the Bible from its place; but only of more thoroughly carrying it into practice. Far from relinquishing their former lively faith in Jesus Christ, they now realised their vital union with Him as never before. Suppose George Keith such a man, unsuspecting at first of the latent tendencies and possible developments of quakerism, only discovering them somewhat late in life, and then at first regarding them not as true quakerism, but as its perversion; and the riddle of his fluctuations is solved. Ifgivings arose in his mind during Fox's lifetime, the extraordinary personal influ-

ence of that great man overpowered Keith's weaker character. One can understand that to Keith, Fox seemed always to hold the balance true, and to be able to restrain his followers from extremes in either direction. There are indications that even during this period, Keith was not perfectly satisfied with quaker opinions. That notion of transmigration was an hypothesis to solve the difficulty of the possibility of the salvation of those who had not heard the gospel story. He thought that pious heathen who had never heard of Christ, might be reborn and so receive the gospel. It is said also, though no date is given, that Keith wished to have a Confession of Faith drawn up, and submitted to every Quaker for signature; a proposition which, perhaps, betrays want of confidence in the orthodoxy of some of his party. After Fox's death, Keith might well think it his duty to be more watchful than before against the intrusion of false doctrine into the society. He began to fear that the manner in which some of the preachers insisted upon the sufficiency of faith in the inner Light, practically excluded faith in the historical person and work of Christ Jesus. When he endeavoured to recall them to a due appreciation of the external historic facts, their opposition seemed to him an accusation that his own preaching Christ without and Christ within was preaching two Christs. It was the old difficulty over which Burroughs and Bunyan wrestled and anathematized each other so long before. If the inward Light is very Christ, the Son of God, the same as the historic Redeemer, then he who has the Light, has Christ: and thus is not dependent upon a distant historic knowledge of Him. Twenty years before, Keith stoutly denied the

charge that the Quakers invalidated the gospel history—now he began to suspect that he was mistaken. We have his own account of the change. “When Fitzwater said in his prayer at the yearly meeting in Philadelphia these words : ‘O God who died in us, and hast risen in us ;’ I did publicly in the meeting reprehend him as speaking blasphemously. . . . If at any time I have said that Christ is crucified in any one, I did in no wise understand it so, that he suffered in the least as God, but as that seed of God suffereth in men by their sins, which seed of God belongeth to Christ, as a certain member of Christ, mystically speaking.”¹ When the flood-gates of controversy were opened, it was easy for the Quakers to prove that Keith in old time had used quaker language and taught quaker doctrine. He in reply could not deny his own statements, which existed in print ; but he asserted that expressions which he had used allegorically were misunderstood. According to him, his adversaries in Pennsylvania “had this sense or meaning of Christ within, that this only should be called and esteemed Christ, which they did feel in their hearts to reprove sin, and to refresh them with a certain joy if at any time they did well.” He does not charge the English Quakers with going to this extreme, but declares that William Penn, who denounced him to his face as an apostate, said in public meeting that “Friends see no great need of preaching the faith of Christ’s death and sufferings. For all England and all Christendom have that faith, and it doth not profit them ; but the faith which profiteth men is the faith of Christ within, and this friends preach.” Keith himself said

¹ Keith’s letter appended to Crose’s history.

something very like this in his quaker days. He asserts however, that he always regarded the Scriptures as the necessary mean and the only rule of faith, and acknowledges that most of the Quakers were unsound in this respect.

One result of the controversy with Keith was the promulgation by the Quakers in 1695, of a Confession of Faith, drawn up, it is said, by George Whitehead, and signed by him and the leaders of the society. This document asserts, what the Quakers firmly believed, the scriptural orthodoxy of their creed. But we learn the real meaning of their system from Barclay's *Apology*, which they recognised as its best exposition. Keith's reply to this celebrated book sets out, fully and fairly, the radical difference between quakerism and the prevalent orthodoxy. Barclay, in his "*Apology Vindicated*," amply confirms this momentous difference. "That is falsely supposed," says the Quaker champion, "that the essence of the Christian religion consists in the historical faith and knowledge of the birth, death, life, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. That faith and historical knowledge is indeed a part of the Christian religion, but not such an essential part, as that without which the Christian religion cannot consist; but an integral part, which goes to the completing of the Christian religion, as the hands or feet of a man, are the integral parts of a man, without which, nevertheless, a man may exist, but not an entire and complete man."¹ In his reply, Keith admits that he himself had used similar language before Barclay, but explains that he meant only that it was not necessary to possess such a clear and explicit know-

¹ *Barclay's Works*, folio edition, p. 895.

ledge, as is contained in the Gospels; otherwise the patriarchs could not have been saved. But in his later time Keith maintains that the ancient saints had a prophetic view of the Redeemer, and that some degree of faith in Jesus Christ as He was to come, or as He has come, in the flesh, is an essential part of the Christian religion. In a word Keith joins issue on the vital points. Barclay taught the sufficiency of the inward Light. Keith denied it. Barclay taught that immediate revelation was given to all believers. Keith asserted that it was given only to prophets and apostles, and required confirmation by miracles. Barclay taught that the Scriptures were a secondary rule. Keith believed in their supreme authority.¹

Keith's case shows that the infallibility of the Bible, and the supreme authority of the Spirit, are doctrines which cannot permanently coalesce. By his return in old age to the Protestant orthodoxy of his boyhood, Keith anticipated in his own person the process which is being more slowly fulfilled in the Quaker Church. The complete circle which he traversed in one life-time, quakerism has not entirely accomplished to this day. But already the majority are essentially Keithian: and unless a new revival carries them, not backward to the unstable position occupied by George Fox, but forward to a new apprehension of Christianity, simpler, clearer, more spiritual, and freer from the ambiguities of early quakerism, we may expect their entire re-absorption in the older churches at no very distant date.

¹ *The Standard of the Quakers examined*: by George Keith.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CENTURY OF QUIETISM.

AFTER the ejection of George Keith, for a hundred years the Quakers had peace, unmolested by persecution, undisturbed by schism. Imprisonment for refusal to pay tithes continued, but with this exception they had no longer any complaint against the law of the land, other than the disabilities common to all nonconformists. They were vexed by no internal dissensions, because no one ventured to question either the doctrine or the discipline received from their fathers. No great thinker developed the system of Robert Barclay, to oppose its spiritualism to the growing rationalism of the age. No great preachers went forth to attack the apostate churches and their hireling clergy, to denounce God's judgment in the market-place and proclaim the gospel of universal grace on the hill-side. They stood on the defensive in their intrenchments, content to let the great world alone, striving only to guard their camp against the intrusion of its corrupting influence. It was the peace of stagnation. One may call this period of their history, the century of quietism, understanding by the term that habit of mind which shrinks from aggressive effort, allows the churches and the world to go on their own way, seeks only to worship God in retirement, to

nourish one's own religious life, and to commend the truth rather by conduct than by preaching. Quietism has a pale beauty of its own, attractive to timid, gentle, humble souls; but it is the beauty of evening twilight and of autumnal decay. Its humility, its sense of human impotence, its scrupulous dread of insincerity, its purpose rather to be than to talk,—these excellent qualities may lead one to mistake quietism for the path of wisdom, the narrow way, the true Christian life. A grave mistake it would be: for that which differentiates quietism is not the possession of these good qualities, of which it has no monopoly, but the absence of, or deficiency in, other good qualities, the faith which has a mission from God to the world; the love which cannot rest in personal salvation; the zeal which sacrifices all, even one's own quietness of spirit, in the service of Christ and humanity. When the Light shone with noon-day clearness in their hearts, the Children of the Light were light-bearers in a dark world; when the seed of God sprang up within them, and brought forth abundant fruits of love, joy and peace, they went forth to sow the seed everywhere. They had been quietists in the days when they were seekers; but when the revelation came they were quietists no longer. Quietism is not perfect Christianity; for Jesus Christ was no quietist, or there had been no crucifixion.

The transition from the boiling enthusiasm of the earlier quakerism to the death-like stillness of its middle period was slow, and at first unsuspected. One by one the aged preachers, who had shared the vigorous life of the time of persecution, passed away, unconscious of the impending change. We first hear the accents of alarm

in the pages of William Bromfield¹ who, returning to England after an absence of more than twenty years, was startled to see the change in the appearance and habits of the once poor despised self-denying Children of Light. Their gay apparel scandalized him; in their dress they were hardly distinguishable from the world. The men wore flaunting periwigs, abominations made of women's or goats' hair, cocked hats, coats cut *à la mode*; the women had their hooped petticoats, laced shoes, clockt hose, gold chains, lockets, jewels, and fine silks. Bromfield roundly accused the Quakers of apostacy: so great was the change. Formerly their cry had been against an apostate Christendom. Now a prophet of themselves cried against apostate Quakers, acknowledging only a remnant as true to their principles.

This Bromfield must have been a notable figure in his time: and as perhaps the last echo of primeval quakerism, the last, or among the last, who boldly claimed the gift of prophecy, his story deserves some attention. He was a medical man, a presbyterian in Cromwell's time, who became a Quaker in 1674. The favour shown by James II. to the Quakers, attached him to the cause of the falling monarch. Having tried in vain to dissuade him from flight, he followed the King to Ireland, and afterwards to Paris, where he acted for years as his confidential secretary. In this situation he incurred the enmity of the Earl of Middleton, who, after King James's death, succeeded in getting him imprisoned in the Bastille. There for nine years he endured much suffering, not with the serene equanimity which had

¹ *The Faith of the True Christian, and the Primitive Quaker's Faith*, by W. Bromfield: 1725.

distinguished George Fox and many more in their imprisonments. Released at length, he returned to England, to be again seized and confined in Newgate, where he penned his Confession of Faith in 1711.

In his own story of his life, appended to this Confession, the reader is struck by the frequency of visions and predictions. Such impressions were common among the early Quakers, but become rare in their later history. This is evident from a comparison of the records of four ministers, Bromfield, Richardson, Chalkley, and Bownas, who were born in the seventeenth century, with those of four others, Churchman, Griffith, Gough, and Woolman, who belong wholly to the eighteenth century. It is noticeable also that the first quarter of the eighteenth century had its crop of religious fanatics, but there is nothing to connect them with the quaker body. There were prophets in Glasgow and in Edinburgh, and three prophetesses in Bristol,¹ as we learn from contemporary pamphlets; though they were so little regarded that there is no record of their origin or connections. Some French prophets who came to London excited more attention, but the Quakers exposed their pretensions.² Putting these facts together, one would naturally conjecture that the later Quakers were in disposed to believe in supernatural manifestations, such as had been unquestioningly accepted in the first days. The journal of Samuel Bownas gives positive proof of this change. He frankly details the process by which the elders of the society in London threw cold water upon quaker pre-

¹ *A Collection of Propheticd Warriors*, by Mary Beer, &c. Bristol, 1709.

² *The History of Quaker, or the French Prophets Exposed*. London, 1707.

tensions to prophecy, and succeeded in silencing them. His friend, Isaac Alexander, first foretold in the Bristol meeting that divine judgment was coming on the people for their pride and wickedness, and that there would be a great mortality. In London, at the Yearly Meeting, he wished to repeat his prophecy, but the elders of the Church were not satisfied, and advised him to return home, which he did, in much trouble of mind. There-upon Bownas himself felt an impulse to go to London on the same errand, determining however to consult some faithful brethren, before delivering his message. Him also, the elders succeeded in silencing, not by peremptory authority, but by judicious procrastination. They advised caution, and waiting upon the Lord, meanwhile visiting him daily with fatherly tenderness, until he was himself content to refrain from publishing the prophecy. Treatment of this kind, steadily persisted in, would place a check upon excited imaginations. Henceforth severe self-repression characterized the Quakers; their grave formality discouraged ebullitions of enthusiasm; and fanaticism had to seek other outlets. Thus the strange American sect, the Shakers, sprang indirectly from the society of Friends. Jane Wardlaw, a prophetess, who announced in the market-place of Bolton, in Lancashire, that the end of all things was at hand, that Christ was about to reign, and that His second appearance would be in a woman's form, was originally a Quakeress. She converted Ann Lee, a poor woman of Manchester, to her faith. Ann Lee gained disciples, and led them to America, where they multiplied, until there are now six thousand of them in eighteen village settlements.¹

¹ *New America*, by Hepworth Dixon, Vol. II., p. 114.

In another respect Bromfield's story indicates a transition state. Hitherto, in spite of frequent schisms, there had been a living unity among the Quakers, in faith, in doctrine, in practice. In an eminent degree they fulfilled the apostolic injunction that they should all speak the same thing and be of the same mind. Their schisms were the direct result of this living unity. The Friends of Truth could not contentedly sit together in their meetings in a mere semblance of harmony; they must be, and know that they were, of one heart, and of one mind. If irreconcilable differences arose, then of necessity some must go out, because in the Church the Spirit of God reigns, and where that Spirit reigns, there is unity. Such was original quakerism; and when Keith differed from his brethren, the controversy was pursued to the bitter end; but in Bromfield's case it was not so. Here was a man uttering heterodox opinions, opposed by another sturdily orthodox; and the Quaker Church declining to intervene. It could not be said that the questions raised were unimportant. In his "Faith of the True Christian," Bromfield gave forth a variation of the Creed. "I. I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. II. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, the Eternal Spirit, which three names makes one only God, without personality. III. I believe also in the doctrine of the great Prophet Jesus, called the Christ, of the seed of David, according to the flesh. IV. Conceived by the prediction of the Holy Ghost. V. Born of the Virgin Mary. VI. Who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was, VII. Crucified, died, and was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the Holy Scriptures. VIII. I believe that God has a

true Church upon earth, and that Church to be universal, which is catholic. IX. In the communion of saints. X. In the forgiveness of sins. XI. In the resurrection of the body, and XII., In the life everlasting." This is plainly a form of unitarianism, and involves a denial of the miraculous conception. Bromfield is explicit on this point. The New Testament, with the exception of Matt. I. 17-25, which passage he rejected on account of its inconsistency with the other passages, teaches, according to his view, that Jesus was the son of Joseph. Though he stoutly maintains that his doctrine was that of all the old Quaker leaders; so far as my reading has gone, none of them denied the miraculous conception, and while they would not use the phraseology of trinitarianism, preferring scriptural language, they were not unitarian. Henton Brown, Bromfield's antagonist, was a decided trinitarian, and claimed the Quaker Fathers as his supporters. To him Bromfield replies: "This angry adversary of mine has taken a great deal of pains and trouble to quote divers of our antient Friends' testimonies concerning Jesus Christ's sufferings, birth, death, and resurrection; all which I know nobody that denies anything, either in the Holy Scripture, or any faithful testimonies left by our Friends, that is consistent with truth; and truly most of the antient Friends that I have heard preach for above fifty years, they always laboured to bring people to the knowledge of Jesus Christ within, the hope of glory, and not to trust to the man Jesus that died at Jerusalem. For, although we all believe that he was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, died and was buried, and rose the third day, and

ascended into heaven; yet we say that the historical faith will save no man, except we come to Christ in his second coming, to purge our mortal bodies from dead works, to serve the living God.”¹ This may be accepted as a fair account of the teaching of the early Quakers, but it does not suffice to show that they would have approved of William Bromfield. The founders of the society were not eager to enter into the trinitarian controversy, being satisfied with and absorbed by their great doctrine of the Light within, and its practical results. If Bromfield’s book had appeared when Fox, Barclay, and Penn were living, it might have been censured. Whether the majority of the Quakers who read it, sympathized with him, or with his opponent, we have no means of judging. The elders who had dissuaded Alexander and Bownas from publishing their prophecies, were content to allow this grave controversy to die out of itself. The reign of quietism was creeping on.

When the progress of deism began to cause alarm in the churches, the Quakers were accused of being deists. As a matter of fact, deism did not spring from quaker soil. Woolston and Tindal were sons of clergymen; Collins belonged to the Church of England; Toland was of Roman Catholic extraction. In antecedents, in temperament, in aim, there was nothing in common between the Quakers and the deists, except only the antagonism of both to the beneficed clergy. Woolston eulogised the Quakers, not because he loved them, but because he hated the priests. Tindal, who uses language strikingly similar to that of the Quakers, clears them

¹ *A Reply to Henton Brown, &c.*, 1726.

of complicity, by denying and mocking their Light within. Despite his contemptuous disclaimer, the resemblance between the deists' "law of Nature," "the clear and distinct *light* that enlightens all men," "the candle of our Maker lighted up in every breast to guide and shine perpetually," and the Quaker's inward Light is startling. Here are two groups of men, agreeing in the assertion of important truths, for instance, the being and perfections of God, man's moral nature and duties; agreeing too in the assertion that they know these truths intuitively and certainly, not as the result of external experience or laborious induction, but by virtue of an internal faculty, which they both call a light within the mind. What conclusion can a rational man deduce from these facts, but that this faculty is the same in both cases; and that if the two groups disagree about the name, this must be merely a verbal dispute, indicating, not a difference in the thing itself, but in their modes of looking at and describing it? Truly if this were so, deism and quakerism would be proved to be the same thing essentially, and the natural reason of Tindal would be the immediate revelation of Barclay, with a mere change of name. Closer examination, however, dissipates our perplexity. The difference is seen to be not at all a verbal one, but entirely in the region of fact. The truth is that the deists were pretenders only. They professed to derive from unaided human reason a knowledge of God which they did not derive from that source, but stole from the Christian Church and Scriptures. We know that this was so, because if natural reason was competent to attain to divine knowledge in the eighteenth century it

would be competent in the nineteenth. Is it? Atheism, Agnosticism, Positivism, loudly answer, No. Then the deists of last century were under a delusion in imagining that their reason taught them these high truths. They had no light of their own, but the light which shone in them, making these truths visible, shone from outside in that Christianity which they strove to undermine. Human reason does not and cannot attain to that knowledge of God, to which the deists laid claim. The Quakers and the deists met as travellers from different regions, and going in opposite directions, may meet at a common camping ground, and speak together in the same language. To the Quakers it was their vernacular, the language of their hearts, expressing a living reality; while the deists only adopted some conventional phrases which were useful for the occasion, but had no real meaning for them, were soon forgotten, and have long been mere nonsense in the ears of their descendants. While this sharp distinction between quakerism and deism must be maintained, it is not improbable that many of the eighteenth century Quakers were infected in various degrees with the rationalistic spirit of the times; certainly they displayed no great vigour in opposing it; hardly eared even to deny the charge of sympathy with it. This too may be another indication of the apathy of quietism.

About 1750 vital religion among the Quakers was at its lowest. The society found itself encumbered with a mixed multitude of nominal professors whose conduct was a constant reproach. The discipline had become almost a dead letter. Offenders went for years uncen-

sured, almost unnoticed.¹ But there were faithful souls who mourned over the general declension, and resolved to "purify the camp." In 1760, a strong committee was appointed by the Yearly Meeting to travel through the land, and exhort the subordinate meetings to this holy work. Samuel Fothergill, William Dillworth, and others, labouring with unwearied zeal for twenty years, effected a great reformation. Disorderly walkers were dealt with individually ; some were won to a genuine or professed repentance, others were excommunicated. Naturally the reform was distasteful to the merely nominal Quakers, and there was opposition. Some went to law, and others threatened violence. In Nottingham, a rich young Quakeress, by name Mary Jerom, was disowned by the meeting, for what fault is not stated. Wealth was no offence among the Quakers, but the pomps and vanities of wealth were condemned ; and it is likely enough that this young lady of property was warned against "the lust of the eye and the pride of life," and resented the admonition. Anyway she refused to submit to disownment ; and carried her case to the law courts. Defeated in her first suit, she gained her second, but the Quakers appealed ; and wealthy as she was, she had had enough of law ;² and succumbed. From one of the seaports, members of the society were in the habit of sending their ships out armed, for defence against enemies and pirates. A deputation which came to remonstrate against this breach of quaker principles had to fly for their lives. These cases, however, must be regarded as quite exceptional. The conflict was a spiritual one, and

¹ *London Friends' Meetings*, pp. 185, 259.

² *Gough's History*, Vol. IV., p. 535.

the resolution of the supporters of discipline prevailed. Before the third quarter of the century expired, its work was done, and the society of Friends assumed the peculiar character, which it preserved intact until a recent period. Plainness of dress became almost a uniform; plainness of speech, a pass-word; rigid insistence upon quaker peculiarities made membership in the fraternity dependent, not on fidelity to Christ and to conscience, but upon loyalty to the traditions of the society. Not that the reformers were conscious of this error, though it has been perceived by their descendants.¹ Nor, if they had been fully aware of all the meaning of their action, is it easy to see any other course open to them, short of the entire abandonment of their position. Having lost the confidence in their divine mission which had animated their fathers to attempt the conversion of all Christendom, having fallen back upon themselves, and undertaken the work of self-purification as the one work given them to do; they nobly resolved to do this work thoroughly and honestly. If a man wished to be accounted a Quaker, he must be a Quaker. They would not allow him to enjoy the reputation and the privileges while shirking the burdens of the society. Unhappily they no longer possessed the same clear light from God, walking in which their fathers knew that they were in the only true Church, to which all the other churches must in the end submit. Quakerism had become a sect, one among many; and therefore laid the greater stress upon those points of difference which gave it a reason for separation. To belong to the society it was not enough to be faithful to Christ, and to conscience; there

¹ *Roundtree's Quakerism*, pp. 139, 153, 168.

was a distinctive something, a peculiar tone and flavour, tenets and customs of their own, which Friends must be compelled to preserve. Doubtless, these good men were persuaded that all these quakerisms were according to the Spirit of Christ, and supported by Scripture; but they did not allow them to depend upon these supports. The quaker tradition was a fixed well-understood system, which could not be submitted to free discussion. If any chafed under this strict rule, the way out was always open. "The flesh saith, there is little in dress, religion doth not consist in apparel. There is little in language; there is little in paying tithes to the priests; there is little in carrying guns in our ships, to defend ourselves in case we are attacked by an enemy. To which, I think, it may be added, there is little or nothing in people who plead as above hinted pretending to be of our society I have often wondered why such continue to profess with us at all."¹ So wrote John Griffith, a zealous minister of those days, who took an active part in carrying out the discipline; and we may be sure, did his best to relieve the society of these half-hearted waverers.

An address, containing queries propounded by the Yearly Meeting with summaries of the replies received, and consequent exhortations, published by the Committee of Visitors in 1761, throws clear light upon the spirit and principles which guided the reformation.² It is remarkable that throughout this long document, there is from the first line to the last, not a trace of anxiety about orthodoxy of belief, not an indication that the

¹ *Journal of John Griffith*, 1779, p. 124.

² *London Friends' Meetings*, p. 381.

society had any standard of doctrine. Barclay's Apology still was the standard. In 1748, when the Plenipotentiaries were assembled at Aix-la-Chapelle to make peace between England and France, the London meeting sent copies of this famous work to them; and with the book, a letter stating that it contained a compendious view of the Christian religion, divested of corruptions.¹ Anthony Benezet's "Short Account of the People called Quakers," published in 1780, teaches Barclay's doctrines, and refers to his writings and those of Penn and Whitehead as acknowledged authorities. The silence of this address cannot be attributed to any inclination to withdraw from the theology of their fathers; but they simply display no concern about dogma, because their whole interest centres in practice. All differences of theological opinion were at this time lulled to rest in the sleep of quietism, or if any existed, the reformers were indifferent to them. Their great anxiety was that Friends should keep their meetings, preserve love and unity; train up their children in a godly conversation, and in the frequent reading of Holy Scripture, as also in plainness of speech, behaviour and apparel; that they should refuse to pay tithes and church-rates; be just in all their dealings; not marry contrary to the rules of the society; and finally should put the discipline in practice. In this address, universal moral duties, and disputable quaker ordinances, appear on an equal footing. This blemish excepted, the tone and spirit of the address are admirable. On one thing these reformers had set their hearts, to make their society in reality what it professed to be a

¹ *Goodwin's History*, IV, 363.

Christian Church; and by a Christian Church, they understood a society in which the Spirit of Christ reigned, in which love to God, and brotherly love, care for the poor, diligence, purity, meekness, suffering for the truth, were the essentials of religion.

Strict and steady application of the discipline saved the society, though at severe cost. The exclusion of the immoral, the worldly-minded, and merely nominal adherents was no loss, but a gain. If, however, Rowntree is right in his opinion that the enforcement of the marriage rule cost the society about one-third of its members, many must have been turned out who were better Christians than others whom the discipline did not touch. For discipline after all can effect only an external reform; it cannot discriminate between living religion and its soulless imitation. In the quaker discipline there was no attempt in this direction; no profession of belief, of conversion, of regeneration, of spiritual experience, was required. If a member of the society by birth was outwardly respectable, and conformed to the usages of the sect, he was undisturbed in his membership; while the Quaker who was a living Christian, if he got married by a priest, suffered excommunication. The society necessarily lost many true members of Christ, and by the operation of its own rules, ceased to be purely and only a Christian Church. Thinned in numbers, those that remained linked together by intermarriage, the Friends became a clan or corporation. They maintained a high standard of morality; enjoyed more than an average share of worldly prosperity; were in good general repute; had no desire to disturb the comfort of their neighbours, and looked

rather shy upon any outsider who wished to enter their society. The discipline was successful in stereotyping quakerism, and preserving it for a time from extinction ; but it could not revitalise the society, could not place it again in the vanguard of progress to lead the Church universal in the pathway of Light to the Eternal City.

Although in its hostility to licence, quakerism stiffened into formalism, and struggling for self-preservation, sank into a sect : we should do it injustice if we mistook its defects for its inner life-spirit. The Christian fraternity which, even in its quietist stage, produced John Woolman, deserves the admiration and gratitude of the whole Church of all time. Nor must we overlook the fact that we owe our knowledge of him to his journal and other writings. There must have been in the society in which a character of such rare loveliness was developed, many kindred souls who wrote no journals : who, less endowed than he, were called to no public service, but who were illumined within by the same celestial light, and shone like him, in their more retired spheres, to the glory of God, and benefit of their fellow-men. Woolman, born in 1720, in New Jersey, did not cross the Atlantic until the year of his death, 1772. He was not therefore a fruit of the revival of discipline which has just been described, but counts rather as one of its motive powers. For although the special visitation referred to above, applied to the British isles only, America being too remote to come under the disciplinary control of the London Yearly Meeting, the Quakers on both sides of the ocean constituted but one Church. The regular interchange of epistles bound the two branches of the Church in unity. Members and ministers passed from one side

to the other with their certificates in their hands, and were equally at home, whether here or there. Of the four ministers whose journals shed light on this period, Gough and Griffith belonged to this country, Churchman and Woolman were American. Three out of the four laboured both in the old country and in the new. Their records show that the spiritual state of the Quaker church was substantially the same in the mother-country and in the colonies. Quakerism was independent of nationality, and John Woolman may be fairly taken as its representative for England as well as America.

The limits of this work forbid an attempt to sketch the life and character of one whose journal Channing pronounced beyond comparison the sweetest and purest autobiography in the language. Edward Irving and Crabb Robinson were hardly less emphatic in their praise. One of our leading reviews regarded Woolman as the man who, in all the centuries since the advent of Christ, lived nearest to the Divine pattern. Whittier, the quaker poet, almost worships the "serene and beautiful spirit redeemed of the Lord from all selfishness."¹ Charles Lamb said: "Get the writings of John Woolman by heart." These eulogiums will surprise those to whom the very name has hitherto been unknown; but let them read his journal and then judge. Possibly they may not at first altogether agree with such high praise. The character, though pure, true and loving, may seem a little too sombre. They may take offence at his excessive scrupulosity, and quarrel with the asceticism to which it led. The Christian life, to

¹ *The Journal of John Woolman.* With an introduction by John G. Whittier, 1883. pp. 2, 3, 49.

please human nature, must be brighter, more joyous, more diversified. But if this be the common feeling, if Woolman seems too much a man of sorrows, let us make this excuse for him; it was not for himself he sorrowed, but for others, and he had a high Example in this. If he felt the wickedness and the woes of mankind too deeply, to the lessening of his own joy, and impairing of his bodily health, was he not at least trying to imitate the Divine Master, whom he loved? A second and a third perusal of his journal will probably modify the first opinion; and the reader may come to see that, even if we allow he was mistaken in some small details, in his life and character as a whole, a heavenly wisdom shines out which is, to mere human sagacity, as clear sunlight is to the glimmer of gas lamps struggling through a fog. In political economy higher, more important and valuable, truth, can be learned from the pages of this uneducated tailor, than in the scientific treatises on the subject. Wisdom in him was not a separate faculty: it was love shedding its light upon facts. If one tries to express the man in one word, that word must be the embodiment of the very spirit of Christianity. It is impossible to tell from his writings, what his dogmatic belief was, or whether he had any. He may have been unitarian, arian, or trinitarian. He may have regarded the Bible as verbally infallible, or he may not. The phraseology of what is called evangelical Christianity is not found in his pages. Substitution, vicarious atonement, he never alludes to; even the historic facts of Scripture are not mentioned; although, in the absence of any trace of scepticism, it is probable that he accepted the history as he read it. But this we

know about the man, that from his childhood he had communion with the invisible God, that "to give himself up wholly to the service of God, to place his whole trust in God, and in all things to act on an inward principle of virtue,"¹ became the constant aim and practice of his life. Through "the revelation of Jesus Christ" he saw "the happiness of humility;" and when increasing trade presented the prospect of wealth, he deliberately turned away, and became a journeyman tailor.² So he lived and laboured, embracing in his wide-reaching love, the negro slave, the Indian savage, the poverty-stricken miners, the factory workers, and agricultural labourers of England: loving them all, not as a professional philanthropist, but because he could not help it: loving them as a mother loves her child.

If Woolman differed at all from the general quaker sentiment it was in a wider tolerance. He "found no narrowness respecting sects and opinions, but believed that sincere upright-hearted people, in every society, who truly loved God, were accepted of Him."³ "All true Christians are of the same spirit." Thomas à Kempis and John Huss were both, in his belief, "sincere-hearted followers of Christ."⁴ Nor does he leave us in doubt as to his conception of Christianity. Once in a time of sickness, sickness near to death, in the night hours he had a vision. He seemed to have forgotten his own name, and to be mixed with a mass of human beings in as great misery as they could be and live, so that his separate identity was gone. Then he heard the angels sing, "John Woolman is dead," and wondered greatly what the heavenly voice might mean. In the

¹ *Journal* p. 63. ² *Ibid*, pp. 67-69. ³ *Ibid*, p. 58. ⁴ *Ibid*, p. 132.

morning when his wife and others came to his bedside, he asked them if they knew who he was. They thought he was light-headed, but he did not tell them his vision, though he greatly longed to understand the mystery. So weak was he, that speech was difficult; at length "I felt a Divine power prepare my mouth that I could speak, and I then said, 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.' Then the mystery was opened and I perceived there was joy in heaven over a sinner who had repented, and that the language, 'John Woolman is dead,' meant no more than the death of my own will."¹ No more than the death of his own will; a mere truism of Christian dogma! Only in his case, it was no theological tenet, but the ruling principle of life. Christ's salvation meant to him no more than that, but also no less. All his days he was striving towards that, enduring petty, and therefore most painful humiliations, risking the esteem of best-loved friends, undertaking the hardest tasks, and straining after what many would account an exaggerated self-denial. It was in later life that he had that vision: yet after a course which to most would have seemed flawless, or its only flaw an excess of self-renunciation, he still regards himself as a repentant sinner, and hears the angels sing over his return as though he had been a prodigal. Let John Woolman die, that Christ may live in him: that was his religion: yet he meant nothing mystical, only the death of his own will.

¹ *Journal*, page 264.

Woolman's life was his greatest service to the Church, and if no special result could be traced to it, it would still command admiration and gratitude. But he affords a striking illustration of the far-reaching influence of simple fidelity to conscience. Never was a humbler soul, nor one who less anticipated being identified with the origin of a world-wide struggle and victory of truth and philanthropy. But, although he was not alone in the work, although anti-slavery feeling found expression among the Quakers before he was born, he and Benezet, a Quaker schoolmaster of Pennsylvania, were the authors of a protest against slavery which achieved the deliverance of the Quaker Church from the stain. To Woolman more than any other is to be attributed this moral victory, which both in its method and its result transcends that of Clarkson and Wilberforce, Lloyd Garrison and Beecher Stowe. The later anti-slavery crusade, both in England and America, was an appeal to public opinion and to the Legislature, to force evil-doers to desist from injustice; and its natural climax was a great war, which cost half-a-million of lives, and treasure more than enough to have redeemed every slave in the Union. Woolman's method, though he would have been glad of legislation in the right direction, could it have been obtained,¹ was an appeal, not to the Government nor to the populace against the slave-holders; but direct to the slave-holders themselves, to that witness for truth, righteousness, mercy, which he believed God had placed in every man's conscience, and therefore in their consciences also. In the prosecution of this appeal, he relied not upon

¹ *Journal*, page 163.

denunciation, but upon love; he pitied the slave-holder not less sincerely than he pitied the slave. Whittier tells a story¹ of another anti-slavery advocate, which strikingly illustrates the change that had passed over quakerism, and the superiority of Woolman's spirit. Benjamin Lay, amid the respectable decorum of eighteenth century quakerism, recalls the extravagances of Huntington and Sale, Sympson and Eccles, in the preceding century. In England he was disowned. In America he violently denounced slave-holding. Expelled from the West Indies, he came to Philadelphia, and found the same evil existing there. He shook the dust of the city off his feet, and took up his abode in a cave, drinking the water which flowed by, and eating only vegetables. His personal appearance was as remarkable as his mode of life. Only four feet and a half high, hunch-backed, with projecting chest, small and uneven legs, and long arms, his head huge, covered by an enormous white hat, from beneath which appeared large solemn eyes and a prominent nose, the rest of his face covered with a long white beard falling low upon his breast, such was the figure which used to issue forth from the cave to preach deliverance to the captive "in Quaker meetings, to the disgust and indignation of the slave-holding Friends." On one occasion he entered the Market Street Meeting, and a leading Friend requested some one to take him out. A burly blacksmith volunteered to do it, leading him to the gate and thrusting him out with such force, that he fell into the gutter. There he lay until the meeting closed, telling the by-standers that he did not feel free to rise. "Let

¹ *Introduction to Woolman's Journal*, page 13.

those who cast me here raise me up. It is their business not mine." The tables were turned, since the days when George Fox was put into Nottingham gaol. Again at Burlington, New Jersey, Woolman's own meeting, Lay appeared in the annual assembly, wrapped in his long white overcoat, and paced up the aisle. Stopping midway he exclaimed, "You slave-holders ! Why don't you throw off your quaker coats as I do mine, and show yourselves as you are !" Casting off as he spoke, his outer garment, he disclosed to the astonished assembly a military coat underneath, and a sword dangling at his heels. Holding in one hand a large book, he drew his sword with the other. "In the sight of God," he cried, "you are as guilty as if you stabbed your slaves to the heart, as I do this book !" Suiting the action to the word, he pierced a small bladder filled with the juice of poke-weed, which he had concealed between the covers, and sprinkled as with fresh blood those who sat near him. Woolman probably was present, but however much he may have felt the force of this "sign," his own testimony against slavery was delivered in an entirely different spirit and manner, and with a different result. Lay was treated as a nuisance : Woolman converted the slave-holders. In 1754, when he printed his first pamphlet on slavery, slave-holding was common among Friends. "Elders and ministers, as well as the younger and less high in profession, had their house servants and field hands." Quakers were engaged in the importation of slaves from Africa, and bought and sold slaves. The Children of the Light quoted the same Scriptures in support of the practice, which were afterwards cited by Presbyterian

doctors, Methodist bishops, and Baptist preachers.¹ Woolman saw slavery in the families which entertained him as he went on his religious journeys, and his conscience compelled him to testify against the injustice, sometimes by giving money to the slaves, and sometimes, at great cost to his own feelings, by offering payment to his hosts for their hospitality. Thirty years after his first public protest, in 1784, the society of Friends in America was entirely free from slave-holding. Not only so, but the society recognised the justice of compensating the slaves for their enforced labour during the time of bondage; and the quondam slave-holders admitted and fulfilled the obligation! All this was accomplished, not by compulsion, but by love: or the only compulsion was the society's refusal, after long patience and years of counsel and remonstrance, to own as Christians those who persisted in oppression. Some few resisted to the last, and had to be excommunicated: but the great majority yielded to the persuasions and example of "pure reason" and "universal love." Human history presents few parallels to this triumph of the spirit of Christ over selfishness and evil custom. If the other Christian churches had wielded Woolman's weapons and won his victory, what a sad and bloody chapter in the history of America would have been escaped!

In John Woolman and Anthony Benezet quaker philanthropy first became conspicuously brilliant. Thenceforth the wellspring of quaker beneficence has never run dry. In the lives of Grellet, and Allen, Joseph Sturge, Elizabeth Fry, and many more, it flowed on, and still it

¹ *Whittier's Introduction*, page 12.

flows, proving that whatever be the defects of the quaker form of Christianity, it has learned this lesson well, that to be a Christian is to live in this world after the manner of Him who went about doing good.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DIVISIONS OF MODERN QUAKERISM.

QUIETISM, it was said, is characterised by its absorption in the cultivation of personal piety, to the neglect of efforts for the salvation of the world. This, however, must not be too rigidly construed. John Woolman, for instance, whose beautiful spirit and holy life were imbued with the purest and best type of quietism, was a very crusader, a knight-errant of God, ever on the watch or march against the powers of darkness. Slavery and selfish luxury were the two special forms of evil which he assailed in a life-long conflict, by land and sea, over thousands of miles; but it was given to him to see through the outward and temporary forms of evil, and to strike through them at the very heart of hypocrisy, selfishness, and unbelief, not the forms of evil, but spiritual wickedness itself. Yet there was something of the defect of quietism in him, manifesting itself in indifference, comparative indifference, to intellectual truth. He found no narrowness with regard to sects and opinions. In comparison with the promotion of virtue and inward spiritual religion, differences of dogma and ritual were unworthy of attention. Thomas à Kempis, writing the *Imitation of Christ*, and John Huss burning at the stake, were both true Christians, of the same spirit, whom he equally commends, though the one belonged to the church

which burnt the other. But the practical difference between burning and being burnt is considerable; and although in Woolman's time religious persecution was obsolete, the antagonisms of belief, which had formerly led to the infliction and endurance of torture and death on their behalf, still remained. Catholic, Protestant, and Quaker, were not only separated in distinct ecclesiastical corporations, but mentally divided by important diversities of creed. It is undoubtedly always right and our bounden duty to give our first attention, and to assign from first to last, the supreme place to the cultivation of right conduct and inward spiritual religion. It may be best for many to avoid controversy upon religious differences; but a contented acquiescence in the division of Christ's Church, in the acceptance of contradictory beliefs as though they were equally true, is not right, nor is it a state of mind which can permanently hold the field. The human mind is impelled by a power beyond itself and its own choice, to seek a solution of its difficulties, to strive for a larger vision of truth, in which diversities shall be harmonized, and all Christendom be reunited in Christ.

Woolman's latitudinarian tolerance was itself a forward movement, part of the general progress of human thought, which conducted quakerism, not to a final resting-place, but to a parting of the ways, where the Children of the Light, unable to agree as to the right path, separated into two companies, one of these again subdividing into two, which companies for these fifty years past have held on their separate ways. The recognition that true spiritual life could and did exist and flourish in other communions quite as well as in

their own, was in fact an abandonment of the original claim of the Children of the Light to be the only true Church. Quakerism found itself in a new position, and had to adapt itself to new relations. Severing itself at first from the great body of the Protestant churches, the original Quaker Church marched on its separate way, under the guidance of the Light within, carrying with it a number of traditional beliefs, which it held in common with all Protestants; just as Martin Luther and the Protestants, in their separation from the Catholic church, brought away traditional beliefs which they had held from their childhood, in common with all Christendom. Now, brought in the progress of the ages to the point at which these traditional beliefs were called in question, a portion of the Quakers fell back upon the inward Light, upon the spirit which promotes virtue and inward religion, as the one certain and sufficient truth. All besides was comparatively indifferent; if indifferent, might be loosely held; if loosely held, might be doubted, even denied. The universal saving Light, the immediate revelation which guides into all truth, this is the one fundamental, essential doctrine of the Christian religion, everything outside of this is unessential. Another and larger part of the Friends moved in an opposite direction. From the acknowledgment that true Christianity could and did exist outside the Quaker Church, they drew the inference that, not the distinctive tenets of quakerism, but the doctrines which were held in common by all Protestant churches, must be the fundamental and vital truths of the Christian religion. Drawn by this attraction, they, insensibly at first, reverted to the Protestant faith in the supreme authority of the Bible. The im-

mediate revelation which Fox believed, which Barclay taught, for which so many of the first Quakers joyfully laid down their lives, was neglected, discredited, by some even disavowed. This retrograde movement of the Biblical party was resisted by a minority, as a heresy not less destructive of true quakerism, than the free-thinking rationalism, which lessened the rightful, though subordinate authority of Holy Scripture. This third party strenuously contended for the doctrine of the inward Light, not only as distinctive of quakerism, but as indispensable to true Christianity : and at the same time stoutly maintained their own orthodoxy, and that of the first Quakers, in respect to the traditional Protestant creed. These three main divisions of the Society were irreconcilable. Whatever remained of John Woolman's tolerant spirit was reserved for the non-quaker churches. Christians of the various evangelical communions might be recognised as such, being altogether outside the range of the internal dissensions of quakerism ; while each branch of the Quakers sternly excommunicated the other two. None could be recognised as Friends, except those who held the genuine doctrine of Friends ; and the genuine doctrine of Friends was to each party that which each party maintained it to be.

The story of these schisms extends over a period of about fifty years, beginning with 1795, and is now hardly worth telling at full length. It includes minor convulsions of a local and temporary character, by which portions of the society were torn away, or cast off, to suffer absorption in other religious communions, or disappear in the vortex of the world. Our concern being with the permanent disruption of the society, it will

suffice to take up the story with the appearance on the scene of the leaders in the conflict, Elias Hicks and Joseph John Gurney. It becomes a question to which of these precedence should be given, because we are naturally inclined to attribute to him who is first presented to our eyes, the blame of disturbing the peace of the Quaker Church by innovations. As, however, Elias Hicks was forty years older than his great opponent, and as the great secession in America was effected under his leadership, before Gurney appeared in that country, let us begin, as the Quaker histories do, with the founder of the "Hicksites," leaving it for subsequent consideration, whether they or their antagonists originated the breach.

If we were to accept unreservedly the impression produced by writers belonging to the hostile branches of quakerism, we should regard Elias Hicks as an apostate, a reprobate, a Simon Magus of the nineteenth century, a Tom Paine masquerading as a Quaker. Grellet asserts that the Hicksites rejected Christ, and accounted the blood shed on Calvary an unholy thing.¹ Joseph John Gurney considered Hicks the author of the most dangerous and the most offensive of all the forms of infidelity which have ever been palmed on the credulity of mankind.² Hodgson, the historian of the third or Willurite party, speaks of his "awful schism," "dreadful errors," the "filth" of his sentiments.³ Tallack says that "many of Elias Hicks's assertions are too blas-

¹ Seebohm's *Life of Stephen Grellet*, p. 208.

² *Strictures on "Truth Vindicated,"* by J. J. Gurney.

³ *See. of Friends in the Nineteenth Century*, by W. Hodgson, pp. 95, 129.

phemous for quotation.”¹ This consensus of condemnation by such excellent Christian men would blast Hicks’s character effectually, were it not for the remembrance that we have heard these shrieks of pious horror before. Just so did Faldo and Baxter, Owen and Bunyan, unite in anathematizing George Fox and the first Quakers. Turning from these invectives of theological opponents to Hicks’s own writings, we at once discover that this arch-heretic was a simple, humble-minded, earnest Quaker of the old school. Hodgson himself admits that “he was esteemed as a good and kind neighbour, bore a good moral character, and appears to have often been useful in his vicinity in works of charitable good will, or in settling differences.”² His outward life thus irreproachable, the genuineness of his inward spiritual religion is manifest in the pages of his journal. Born in 1748, in Long Island, of Quaker ancestors, his youth was passed amid the Friends among whom John Woolman ministered, and probably he himself heard Woolman preach. Hicks was a country farmer; in his youth fond of his gun, and of dancing, but he abandoned these pleasures at the call of religious conviction. During the American war of Independence, he felt himself called to the ministry, and thenceforth laboured with great zeal, and attained a high place in the esteem of the society. He was a born orator, worthy to be ranked with, or above, Webster, Clay, and Everett. “Tall, and of most shapely form, with black eyes that blazed at times as meteors, he had an inner apparently inexhaustible fund of volcanic passion—tenderness blended with

¹ *Thomas Shillitoe*, by William Tallack, p. 84.

² *Hodgson* I. 100.

a curious remorseless firmness, as of some surgeon operating on a beloved patient."¹ His great theme was the Light within; his one aim to promote a true, living, spiritual, practical Christianity. He was more dogmatic and controversial than Woolman. There seems to have been in him a revival of the old aggressive zeal, and something of the acerbity, of the early Quakers. "Hireling priests" were as offensive in his eyes as in those of George Fox. He would have no compromise with the religions of the world, and denounced all new-fangled methods and arrangements for religious work and worship in the will of man. He was a Quaker to the back-bone, and stood out manfully for the "ancient simplicity." This so-called infidel, finding that some members of the society were captivated by Paine's Age of Reason, writes in his journal; "Under a sense thereof, my spirit was deeply humbled before the Majesty of Heaven, and in the anguish of my soul I said, 'Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach, and suffer not thy truth to fall in the streets.'"² Pressed in spirit, he preached "the light, spirit, grace, and truth of our Lord Jesus Christ, our holy pattern, as the only place of refuge."³ Again, he was "led to show the danger of trusting the salvation of our souls to anything short of a full surrender of our wills, and an entire dedication of our hearts to the Lord, in an humble circumspect walking before Him, and separating ourselves from the world, its spirit and manners."⁴ So he laboured on until he was eighty-two years old, consistently pointing to

¹ Walt Whitman, in *The Century Magazine*, New Series, Vol. XL, p. 538.

² *Journal*, p. 70.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

“the inward manifestation of divine light, which reveals itself in the heart of man, against sin and uncleanness, as essential and sufficient to salvation.”¹ This was his dying testimony. “The cross of Christ is the perfect law of God, written in the heart . . . there is but one Lord, one faith, and but one baptism . . . No rational being can be a real Christian, and true disciple of Christ, until he comes to know all these things verified in his own experience.” He was a good man, a true Christian, and a Quaker of the Quakers. His very errors were the errors of a Quaker, and since the generation of the personal disciples of George Fox, it would be difficult to point out any man, who had a simpler and firmer faith in the central truth of quakerism than Elias Hicks.

This being so, one wonders why this man came to be regarded by the majority of the Society as an emissary from the bottomless pit. Nor is our wonder lessened when we notice that he was seventy years old before rumours of his heresy were generally current, and had attained his full fourscore years, when he and his followers were extruded from the Society. Stephen Grellet, it is true, discovered his heterodoxy so early as 1808;² but even then Hicks was sixty years old, and it must be remembered that Grellet was a Frenchman by birth, and educated as a Roman Catholic, so that he cannot be regarded as a representative of American quakerism. Besides Grellet, here and there one and another felt uneasy about Hicks, but the facts remain that until near the close of his long life Hicks was in general esteem, that there is no sign anywhere in his writings of a

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

² Seebohm's *Grellet*. Vol. I., p. 142.

change of opinions, or new departure in his teaching, and that when at last he was forced to secede, he carried with him about one third of the Church, who then and since maintain that they and he were always faithful to the original Quaker doctrine. These facts suggest that the fierce conflict which arose is not to be attributed to Hicks's defection from quakerism, but, on the contrary, to his determined and somewhat narrow-minded resistance to a perceptible departure of many of the Friends from the spirit and practices of their forefathers. Indeed there is little room for doubt on this point. John Wilbur traces the origin of the low state of the society in England to the Friends joining with the bishops and clergy in the formation of the Bible Society, and points out that where the parents cordially joined with the "hireling clergy," their children learnt not only to embrace their parents' friend, the priest, but the priest's principles also.¹ Now Elias Hicks was an outspoken opponent of Bible and Missionary Societies; the methods and underlying ideas of which are repugnant to the spirit and practices of George Fox. Jealousy of reliance upon the efficacy of the letter of Scripture was carried to an extreme by the first Quakers. The Bible was not read in quaker meetings for worship, nor is it to this day as a rule; although in a few meetings liberty to read a portion of Scripture has been claimed and yielded. Reading the Scriptures aloud in the family, now a well-established custom, was an innovation in Hicks's time.² Samuel Bowmas, a worthy minister of the old school, was uneasy in his mind lest he should search the Scrip-

¹ *Journal of John Wilbur*, p. 113.

² Rowntree's *Quakerism*, p. 54.

tures too much, and half apologises for taking his Bible out of his pocket.¹ Again, if there was any one feature in the religions of the world, more abhorrent to the early Quakers than another, it was the employment of "hirelings" to preach the Gospel. These may be narrow-minded and mistaken prejudices, and the modern Friends who sympathise with and support Bible and Missionary societies may be congratulated on their wider views; but they are the innovators, and Elias Hicks was the conservative Quaker. The novelties to which he objected were symptoms of a deeper change going to the very root of quakerism. Before we listen to the charge of heresy brought against Hicks, it will be well first to examine the theological position of the other two divisions of quakerism.

Joseph John Gurney, born in 1788, and thus Elias Hicks's junior by forty years, became the recognised leader of the largest body of the modern Quakers. Though the two men never came personally into collision, though the Hicksite schism was an accomplished fact before Gurney crossed the Atlantic, there is a solid basis for this recognition of Hicks and Gurney as the leaders on the opposite sides. Neither of them originated the movements with which they became identified. Both were mighty men of valour, unflinching combatants for the truths which they believed, unrivalled in ability, in earnestness, in abundant labour, by any of their followers. Hicks stood up for old-fashioned quakerism of the primitive type, which, but for him, might have quietly and insensibly disappeared, submerged by the rising tide of the evangelical revival. Gurney was the

¹ *Journal of Samuel Bownas*, pp. 20, 32, 98.

child of that revival, the consequence, not the cause, of its introduction into the society of Friends; but without him its development would have been long delayed; perhaps, indeed, the adherents of the old quaker doctrine might have succeeded in ejecting it from the society. His writings, his personal influence, were the means by which it won its remarkable triumph. He may therefore rightly be studied as the representative of the evangelical branch of the Quakers; and there are ample materials for the study.

Gurney was a Quaker by descent, by affection, but only accidentally, and superficially: in the heart and life of his religion he was an evangelical Protestant of the school of Wesley, Simeon, and Wilberforce. To be convinced of this it is only necessary to read his books with open eyes. He did not abandon quakerism, because he never believed it, never understood it. From the first his spiritual life was alien to the society to which he outwardly adhered. To him quakerism was not Christianity, and Christianity was far dearer than quakerism. He could not find it in his heart to forsake the church of his fathers, which he sincerely believed to be a branch of the visible Church, and a branch in some respects purer and nearer to the primitive faith and practice than the other branches. But he saw that the spiritual life of the society of Friends was at a low ebb, and contemplated its extinction as possible. Whatever might be its fate, he was determined to devote his life to the promotion of pure gospel doctrines.¹ We need to go very little way into his writings to make the dis-

¹ *Memoirs of J. J. Gurney*, by J. Pevan Braithwaite. Vol. I., p. 375.

covery that Gurney's conceptions of the gospel differ widely from those of George Fox. Asked to set forth the way of salvation, instead of pointing the inquirer to the Light within, he begins by attempting to prove the genuineness of the New Testament writings; for unless he can produce faith in the words of Scripture, he has no basis on which to build.¹ Half conscious that his quakerism was not radical, that the root of his convictions grew in other soil, in ground which the first Quakers had abandoned, he asked himself why he was a Quaker, and his "Observations on the Peculiarities of the Society of Friends," present his view of the reasons which justify the separate existence of the sect. Here he distinguishes between peculiarities and essentials; by peculiarities he means "the particular sentiments and practices which distinguish the different classes of true Christians."² These peculiarities are in his view comparatively unimportant, and "Christians, united as they are in the great fundamentals of doctrine and practice, should abstain from judging or condemning one another on account of their minor differences." In this book Fox's fundamental doctrine of the inward Light is regarded as one of the peculiarities! If any doubt about the anti-quakerism of Joseph John Gurney can remain, it will be dissipated by an honest consideration of his "Essays on the Evidences, Doctrines, and Practical Operation of Christianity," the fundamental conceptions of which are at the very antipodes of original quakerism. The title of the first essay indicates the immense divergence. "On the probability of a divine revelation to

¹ *A Letter to a Friend*, &c., 1824.

² *Observations*, p. 30.

mankind and on the genuineness of the New Testament." Try to imagine George Fox or Robert Barclay listening to this discussion of "antecedent probability that during the course of His government of the world God would bestow upon mankind, a clear outward revelation"! Every line, every phrase, manifests the anti-quaker. How long would George Fox have allowed him to proceed, before sternly demanding; "Art thou then blind to the clear *inward* revelation which is no mere probability, but a divine *certainly*? If so, thou art no Christian." In this harsh condemnation George Fox would have exhibited the fallibility of his judgment; but sincere Christian as he was it is certain that Gurney's root conception of Christianity agreed with that of Baxter, Bunyan, and Faldo, was diametrically opposed to that of Fox, Burroughs, and Howgill. Christianity is in his view essentially an external revelation, accredited by miracles. His religion is emphatically a book-religion. With him the authority of the Bible is paramount to every other. "Faith . . . is a reliance of the mind on the truth of that which is probable, but not known."² The doctrine of the universal saving Light, the very life-blood of quakerism, has no place in Gurney's system. We search the five hundred pages of this book for one trace of genuine quaker doctrine, and search in vain. How Gurney could call himself, think himself a Quaker, is at first sight inexplicable; but the mental process was simple. Whether he consciously reasoned out the matter or no, he evidently took his stand upon the fact that quakerism from the first declared itself no new invention: it was primitive

¹ *Essays*, p. I.² *Essays* XII.

Christianity revived; that and nothing else. He, Joseph John Gurney, was a Christian and therefore a Quaker. To the "religious peculiarities" of quakerism, he cordially adhered, and as to the fundamental differences between it and evangelicalism he persuaded himself that they never existed. Fox and the early Quakers were unquestionably Christians, and Christianity, as Gurney saw it, is the infallibility of the Scriptures, and the forensic theory of the Atonement. Not to hold Gurney's doctrines is not to be a Christian: therefore George Fox and the rest, whatever they *said*, must have *meant* what Gurney meant. When Gurney denounced Fox's teaching, he called it Hicksism. Confronted by quotations which could not be explained away, he admitted that "some of their early writers in the heat of controversy, expressed themselves obscurely and even, it may be, incorrectly."¹ Later on he grew bolder, and in the face of the London Yearly Meeting declared, "that many writers and individuals, both in the early and latter ages of this Society, in their zeal to uphold their own views, had sadly committed themselves on this subject [the authority of Holy Scripture]; and he regretted to acknowledge it. They had advocated principles which he did not hesitate to declare, if carried out, were completely subversive of Christianity."² Among these "many writers" must be included Fox, Penn, Barclay, and almost or quite every other whose writings have come down to us from the first and second generations of quakerism. Yet in spite of all this evidence, Gurney persuaded himself that the society had always

¹ *Strictures on Truth Vindicated*.

² *Hodgson*. Vol. I. p. 302.

been orthodox. It was an amiable delusion. Who that has read the story of the early Friends can help loving them? What heart capable of sympathising with their extraordinary conscientiousness, their heroic constancy, their whole-hearted self-consecration, their lives luminous with the Divine Light of Christ, can consent to unchristianize them, on account of theological errors? In the heat of controversy the Puritans pronounced them accursed; but now all Christendom has reversed the judgment. What wonder that Gurney could not bring himself to excommunicate and anathematize his own ancestors, both of the flesh, and of the spirit? But he must do this, or persuade himself that they were always orthodox at heart. He did more than this; he not only persuaded himself, he carried the great bulk of the society along with him, in repudiating the quaker doctrines, while asserting that the Quakers were always sound in the faith.

After the Hicks schism in America, John Wilbur, a worthy minister of the old quaker type, visited England, and was present at the London Yearly Meeting in 1832. Being one of those who had rent the American Society of Friends in twain, in order to eject the Hicksite heresy, his orthodoxy as a Quaker was above suspicion. On his arrival he soon discovered the serious defection of English Quakers from the faith of their fathers. "There are many here, and some among the foremost who are disposed to think that the writings of Robert Barclay and others among our ancient Friends are incorrect, and do not hesitate in so saying; and further say that the Scriptures are the 'Word of God,' and the first, if not the only rule of practice, as well as of faith, and recommend that

ministers rely upon them more and more for a qualification to preach."¹ He found "among this people under one name, two armies arrayed, army against army."² Elizabeth Fry tried to make out that they were one in spirit, but John Wilbur was not to be persuaded. He met Joseph John Gurney, and accused him to his face, of being unsound in the doctrines of Friends. Wilbur found a small remnant who sympathized with him: John Barclay, a descendant of the author of the "Apology," T. B. Gould, who continued to believe that "Joseph John Gurney is as great an enemy to the Truth as ever he was,"³ and others. All the Quakers were not fascinated by the eloquence and piety of the new leader, though the great majority were. The publication of some letters by Wilbur protesting against this disloyalty to the old standards, brought the matter to a head. Isaac Crewdson retorted in a little book called the "Beacon," professedly a warning against the errors of Elias Hicks, but really a point-blank renunciation of Robert Barclay and the doctrine of immediate revelation. A sharp controversy ensued. So many protests against the "Beacon" were heard, that the leaders of the society tried to silence its author. Crewdson had moved too fast for the main body of the Friends. Refusing to submit to censure, he and his small band of adherents resigned their membership. The open assailants of the quaker doctrines received a rebuff, and for the moment, the Quakers of the old school successfully asserted their right to continue in the church of their fathers. But it was their last rally in this country. In the Yearly Meeting of 1836 Gurney

¹ *Journal of the Life of John Wilbur*, p. 139.

² *Ibid.* p. 157.

³ *Ibid.* p. 233.

plainly intimated his fixed resolve to retire from the society, rather than unite with that which in his view was unsound. "No, my friends," said he, "we are, we always have been, and by the grace of God, we always will be, a Christian body; but when once we shall have admitted the principle that impressions made upon our own minds can be superior to Scripture, we have ceased to be Christians."¹ The "impressions made upon our own minds"—by what? by whom? The Quakers of the olden time believed in immediate revelation from the Holy Ghost, in the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them, guiding them into all truth; and the impressions made *by this Spirit*, they held to be the primary rule; the Scripture, only a secondary rule. But Joseph John Gurney would not have it so; he was not content to deny the belief of his fathers; he insisted that such had never been their belief; and the Yearly Meeting acquiesced. A new declaration of belief in the Holy Scriptures, in accordance with his sentiments, was adopted,² and from that time Robert Barclay's "Apology" ceased to be the quaker standard of orthodoxy. One more edition was issued at the expense of the Society, but its assailants at length succeeded in obtaining a practical repudiation of it by the authorities of the London Yearly Meeting.³

Soon after Gurney visited America. Here John Wilbur resolutely opposed him; only to incur the penalty of excommunication for his fidelity to the ancient quaker creed. But the American Quakers were not so unanimous as those in England. One-third of them had seceded with Elias Hicks. The larger body again divided, the

¹ *Hodgson*, Vol. I., p. 301.

² *Ibid.*, I., 305.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 367.

smaller fraction following John Wilbur. From this time the Quaker Church has been divided into three distinct societies, besides some smaller fragments of which it is not necessary to give account in this place. Each of these three societies claims to be the society of Friends, to the exclusion of the other two. After forty or fifty years of separation, they still remain apart, though their mutual repulsion is perhaps less decided than at first. But history can hardly include within its scope, events which are still taking shape. Our review of quakerism has conducted us to this tripartite division, and must be concluded with an attempt to estimate its character and meaning. Let us place ourselves in the midst of the third and smallest party of the three, which, for convenience, we may call the Wilburites, and from their point of view describe the opposite errors of the other two sections.

To the Wilburites the heresy of Elias Hicks was no less shocking than to the Gurneyites. Hodgson, the Wilburite historian of these nineteenth century schisms, detects the first symptoms of unsoundness in Hicks's teaching, in an excessive attachment to the doctrine of Christ within, to the neglect of the historical manifestation of the Lord Jesus in Judea.¹ Next he accuses Hicks of disparaging the Scriptures and of a rationalistic treatment of the Bible. Elias Hicks revived Bromfield's doubt about the miraculous conception, regarded the story of the Fall as an allegory, and denied the personality of the devil. The horrified recoil of his critic from these audacious sentiments clearly shows the Wilburite position. With them the infallibility of the Bible was

¹ *Hodgson*, I., Chapter IV.

unquestionable truth, and this doctrine made a sharp line of division between them and the Hicksites. Hodgson also accuses Hicks of degrading our blessed Lord Jesus Christ to a mere man, and His work to mere example, depreciating or denying His atoning sacrifice. In the eyes of the Wilburites, as of the Gurneyites, Hicks was a rationalist, a socinian, an antichristian. His doctrines are "filth," and to excommunicate him and his followers was imperative Christian duty. Yet even Hodgson had some doubt whether Hicks really was so bad, whether he really appreciated the scope of his expressions, and meant all that this interpretation puts upon his words. Sorrowfully but firmly he gives judgment against Hicks: we may use our freedom and reconsider the case.

Was Elias Hicks a unitarian, a rationalist, an antichristian? The application of the last epithet is simply the outcome of theological prejudice, and may be set aside at once. Was he a unitarian? He was not a trinitarian, as the early Quakers were not. He and they alike refused the language and the conceptions of the Athanasian creed. They however frequently asserted their belief in the "three that bear record in heaven," in the deity of Christ, and of the Spirit. Hicks appears to have believed that Christ, the Eternal Word, the Light and Life of men, is truly God: that Jesus, the son of Mary, was truly man, his divinity consisting in the indwelling of the Eternal Word in him. Was Hicks a rationalist? If in any respect he went beyond the teaching of George Fox, it was in his greater freedom in criticizing Scripture, his greater reliance upon right reason. It must be remembered, however, that in-

E. H. Hicks, Eclectic Discourses, Sermon VIII.

terpretations of Scripture which are now accepted by many, perhaps by most, intelligent readers of the Bible, made our forefathers shudder. The calm, sober and scriptural reasoning of his follower, S. M. Janney, is sufficient to exonerate the Hicksites from the charge of irreverent and irrational criticism of the Sacred Text.¹

Returning to our standpoint in the Wilburite section, let us now look at the Gurneyites through their spectacles. Why was it that John Wilbur, John Barclay, William Hodgson, T. B. Gould, and others, regarded the Gurneyites as schismatics, no less false to the Truth than was Elias Hicks? Because the Wilburites believed in the divine revelation given to George Fox. The new declaration about the Scriptures adopted by the London Yearly Meeting, they stigmatise as "false and insidious," "a direct abandonment of the principle always promulgated in the writings of the early Friends, that 'the appointed means' for the soul of man to obtain a saving knowledge of God, is a being taught in the school of Christ, through obedience to the 'Inspeaking Word,' and faith in the revelations of His Holy Spirit immediately in the heart; which will always be *consistent with* Scripture."² In their view, Elias Hicks rejected the Bible; Joseph John Gurney rejected the Spirit. Both errors were fundamental and fatal. They only who adhered to the ancient doctrines of quakerism, were true both to the Holy Scriptures, and to the Light within, the immediate teaching of the Spirit, without which we cannot be saved.

Must we then come to the conclusion that the

¹ *Conversations on Religious Subjects*, by S. M. Janney.

² *Hodgson* I, 396, 397.

Wilburites are the true Quakers, the genuine descendants of George Fox? If mere fidelity to traditional belief is to decide, judgment must be given in their favour. But this consideration compels a pause. It was a marked characteristic of the Children of the Light that they would not be content with a traditional belief. It was not enough for George Fox that God's word came to apostles and prophets thousands of years before; not until God spake to *him* in his own heart, was he satisfied. And that divine Voice spake in all men, would they but attend. Therefore he did not dream of adding a new tradition to the old, of supplementing Scripture by authoritative writings. The Wilburites tenaciously clung to the tradition that God had revealed His truth to Fox and the early Quakers, but they had no equally clear consciousness that they themselves had this same revelation, given directly to them. This led them to hold their faith in a traditional way. They practically reversed original quaker doctrine; their faith resting primarily on the Scriptures *and* the records of their fathers; only secondarily upon the Light within. The declaration respecting the Scriptures introduced by Joseph John Gurney was offensive to them, because it was intended to "exclude the idea of any divine authority in the writings of such men as George Fox, Robert Barclay, or Isaac Penington, or in the excellent code of discipline and confessions of faith established and acknowledged by Friends under the pointings of wisdom from on high."¹ William Gauntly contended that George Fox's Journal "is a divinely authorised record of doctrines of true religion,

¹ *Hodgson* I. 307.

or else George Fox was an impostor ; but I believe him to have been truly an eminent apostle.”¹ “Not that we would by any means put our own writings *on an equality* with the Holy Scriptures,” says Hodgson, “but as some of them possessing *a degree* of the *same* authority.”² The Spirit is the primary rule, said George Fox, the Scriptures, only a secondary rule ; and our Quaker books are a tertiary rule, say the Wilburites, not quite equal to the Bible, but practically more authoritative in determining what quakerism is ; in controversy between the sections of the Quaker Church, the appeal should not be to the New Testament but to the writings of Fox and Barclay. If it be said that this appeal to a tertiary rule is following the example of George Fox who stoutly maintained the infallibility of his doctrine and discipline, imposing it peremptorily upon every member of the Church ; this is granted. The Wilburites stereotype the errors of their founder, and in their adherence to the “letter” of early quakerism, misinterpret its spirit. Though the first Quakers made a tremendous mistake in their notions of infallibility, it was the infallibility of the Spirit they relied upon, not their own ; and if they would not subordinate the teaching of the Spirit to the Bible, they still less would have consented to erect their own writings into an authoritative standard. Elias Hicks was in spirit more loyal to George Fox and the early Quakers than was John Wilbur ; for he did not build his faith upon the writings of George Fox, but upon the Truth itself, and was ready to follow the Truth whithersoever it led. Yet Hicks also was more under the influence of quaker traditions than he knew.

¹ *Ibid.* II. 356.² *Ibid.* III. 355.

He was an echo rather than an original voice from Heaven. He could not see that quakerism required to be reformed, before it could offer itself as the pattern for a general reformation. The main body of the society, following Joseph John Gurney, shook off the foolish notion of quaker infallibility, but at the same time gave up that faith in the real presence of Christ in His Church by His Spirit, which was the very essence of original quakerism. In exalting the Scriptures to the paramount authority, they made the Bible a necessary mean between the human heart and the divine Spirit. True or not, one cannot deny the cogency of Hodgson's appeal to quaker writings in proof that this is the exact contrary of the teaching of George Fox.

The Children of the Light are extinct. For one generation their light blazed as a beacon, attracting the attention of all Christendom. Soon it died down and disappeared. Their descendants no longer claim the name, can make no pretension to be the Light-bearers, illuminating the onward track, pointing out to all the churches, the only way to true reformation, unity, and victory over the world. Their story has been told: it remains now to gather its lessons. Was their early promise a delusion? Was their "Light" a false fire, kindled by the friction of human fanaticism? This is a question of wider range than quakerism; it concerns all Christianity: it belongs to the very nature of man. One may well tremble at the thought of entering upon so vast, so vital an inquiry.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PECULIARITIES OF QUAKERISM.

IF the great central doctrine and originating impulse of quakerism, the Light within, is a delusion, what remains after that is removed is of comparatively small importance. Still having traced the history from George Fox to Joseph John Gurney, let us, before reverting to the founder of the society, give some attention to the present position of the sect. In the view of Joseph John Gurney the true visible Church of Christ consists of a number of societies, united in the great fundamentals of doctrine and practice, but divided by minor differences, "particular sentiments and practices distinguishing the different classes of true Christians, which may be denominated religious peculiarities."¹

To make a precise list of the particular sentiments and practices which distinguish the society of Friends would not be easy, because they are not a fixed quantity. Some of the old well-known marks of the eighteenth century Quaker, the peculiar garb, singularity of speech, refusal to doff the hat, hostility to music, art, and innocent recreations, have disappeared, or are disappearing. Other peculiarities still generally maintained, are already called in question, and sometimes given up by individuals and by meetings; the exclusion of psalmody,

¹ *Observations on the Religious Peculiarities, &c.*, page 30.

and of the reading of the Bible from public worship, for instance. In America some Friends desire liberty to use the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; but this innovation is stoutly resisted by the majority. Six peculiarities may be named as characteristic of the society; two relating to social and political life, viz. the refusal to take an oath and the testimony against war; the other four affecting the internal religious life of the society. These are, the disuse of the ordinances or sacraments, silent worship, recognition of women as ministers, and the strong objection to a paid ministry.

Before considering the merits of these peculiarities, it is reasonable to inquire, by what standard are they to be judged; by the written Word, or the teaching of the Spirit? Modern quakerism emphatically asserts the paramount authority of Scripture: yet Gurney claims for the tenets of Friends the authority of the Spirit also.¹ Nevertheless it is an important consideration that in the view of the modern Quaker, none of these truths and duties attain to the first rank of certainty and authority. They are not "fundamentals," but "minor differences," "religious peculiarities." Is it then lawful to exalt into terms of communion and conditions of membership, sentiments and practices which, confessedly, the great Head of the Church does not make the conditions of union with Him? Not to press this question, which is an awkward one for others besides the Quakers, let us note that for some of these tenets, plain imperative Scripture commands are quoted. But also it cannot be overlooked that other equally plain and imperative Scripture commands which might have been erected into

¹ *Observations*, Chap. III.

quaker peculiarities are disregarded. Again, some of their cherished sentiments and practices are contrary to the express injunctions of Holy Scripture: in the opinion of most readers of the Bible, both learned and simple. In all this inconsistency and perplexity, however, the Quakers are neither more nor less involved than the other Protestant churches. George Fox laid down a clear principle, which, consistently followed, would guide through every difficulty, viz. that the Spirit of Christ, and not the letter of Scripture, is the supreme authority. But even George Fox was far from consistent in the application of the truth which had been revealed to him; the prejudices of hereditary traditional belief were still strong, and had greater influence over him than he himself knew. As for those who assert, as do some of his descendants, that the letter of Scripture must govern all, they in common with the rest of the Protestants are compelled by their initial error to resort to ingenious reasonings, to justify their adherence to the letter in one case, and their neglect or contravention of the letter in another.

Let us briefly glance at these six peculiarities. Strongest in the support of Scripture authority is the refusal to take an oath. "Swear not at all," is a command which appears to admit of no possible exception. But so also is the command, separated from the former by only a few lines of text, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away;" and a little further on we read, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." So we might go on quoting, to illustrate the difficulty into which a rigidly literal and legal insistence upon the

superficial meaning of Scripture words has plunged so many souls from the first until now. Have we not yet learned that our Divine Teacher's words are spirit and are life, only to be understood as interpreted by His quickening spirit? If the very letter of Christ's words is to be strained to the utmost, then the quaker refusal to swear in a court of justice is binding, not upon them only, but upon all. If however the whole Christian Church including the Quakers, does not obey the letter in many other cases, then it is open to discussion whether it ought to be decisive in this case. Such a discussion need not be entered upon here; we having before us the much more important question, whether the Spirit of Christ is not indeed the living, ever present guide, the only trustworthy interpreter of Scripture? If that truth be recognised, is it then clear in the light of that Spirit that it is under no circumstances lawful for a Christian to take an oath?

The command "Resist not evil," as heard by quaker ears, plainly forbids the Christian to engage in war under any circumstances whatsoever. But this is one of those cases the analogy of which casts doubt upon the quaker view of the precept referred to in the preceding paragraph. Verbally considered, "resist not evil," does not specially apply to war. Evil, as a mere word, includes moral as well as material evil; and resistance may be moral as well as physical. If this injunction were interpreted literally, without permission of any limitation to the widest sweep of the words, it would conduct not only to abominities, but to participation in iniquity. There never has been any one so foolish and irreverent as to wrench these words from their context,

and force them to a universal application plainly beyond the original intention. A particular and limited meaning being the true one, the question arises, does that meaning certainly forbid military operations? There is nothing in the context to show that it refers to the soldier more than to the policeman. Whether therefore the Quakers rely upon this precept, or upon the exhortation "Love your enemies," it cannot be said that they are indisputably supported by the letter of Scripture, in their objection to the protection of life and property against foreign attack by arms. Their testimony against war finds surer support in the spirit of Christianity. With the sad story of eighteen Christian centuries behind us, and the present spectacle of all Europe in arms prepared for fratricidal strife, no Christian would wish that testimony less clear, less persistent. Nor would he willingly allow the blessing of the peace-maker to be a peculiarity of quakerism. Christianity is opposed to war, not so much because war means the infliction of physical injury, as because it springs from covetousness, pride, ambition, hatred, lust of territory, greed of commerce; base and selfish passions which war within and against the soul. Let it be sorrowfully admitted that Christian churches have been far too ready to espouse national quarrels, have frequently failed in their duty to protest against the unrighteous wars of ambition and greed; and all honour be given to the peace-loving Quakers who have so often, amid mockery and obloquy, protested against the folly and wickedness of mutual slaughter. But if the Friends will so shape their protests, and base them on such grounds, that there can be nothing of quaker peculiarity

in them, it will be easier for other Christians to confederate with them in their efforts to maintain peace.

The quaker tenets in respect to oaths and war probably originated in interpretations of Scripture which were considerably influenced by the events of the time. In those days of civil strife, King Parliament and Protector in succession exacted oath after oath; men swore and forswore; scrupulous consciences were ensnared and troubled. Fox would clear away all this trouble by a single stroke. Christ said, "Swear not at all;" so let all regal, civil, military authorities be set at naught in this respect. Similarly, the decision against war was called forth by the solicitations to enlist on this side, and on that. The assertion that Christ's spirit is against all wars set the soul free and gave it peace in the midst of the conflict of Cavaliers and Roundheads. The four peculiarities now to be considered have a deeper root. Though texts can be produced both for and against these, the weight of Scripture, it will generally be agreed, is opposed to the quaker views. Be this so or not, it is evident that these peculiar views about worship have their common origin in the quaker doctrine of the Spirit. Christian worship, in the faith of the Children of Light, is purely spiritual; it is not merely worship in which man's spirit approaches the Eternal, but worship inspired by the Spirit of God. The use of symbolic rites by the early Christians was, according to them, only a temporary survival of Judaism, permitted in the infant days of the Church, but not permissible to those who have grown to the understanding of pure spiritual Christianity. Worship must be a silent waiting of the soul, until the Spirit moves to praise, or prayer, or preaching;

for all words without the Spirit are meaningless and offensive. Man may not set limits to the Spirit of God; therefore the women are as free to prophesy as the men, if it please the Divine Spirit to move them. The sacred function of the ministry cannot be entrusted to a professional class, engaged and paid to undertake at set times, with or without a liturgy, a worship which is displeasing to God, because it is not the fruit of His own inworking Spirit. For the Quaker, therefore, there is no priesthood, no sacrament, no liturgy, no hymn-book, not even a Bible, in his meeting for the worship of God; he will have no one appointed to preside: Christ is present and presides. There is nothing but an assembly of human souls, gathered into solemn stillness, in the immediate presence of the Deity, waiting until it shall please God to speak in and through one of them, to and for the rest.

This is indeed a spiritual worship; only fitly to be contemplated in a reverent spirit. Let us try to estimate it according to the truth. Devoid of all external attractions, there is a great attractiveness in its simplicity and spirituality. We see how it at once sweeps away the gravest blemishes, the grossest corruptions, which have been the scandal and the disease of Christendom. If this simple spiritual worship had prevailed in the Church from the first century onward, the whole Roman hierarchical system with its colossal perversions of Christianity could not have arisen. There would have been no tyrannical priestcraft, strangling civil and religious liberty; no interposition of human mediators between God and the soul; no externalization of the redemptive work in miraculous sacraments; no tremen-

dous burden of dogma imposed by councils and by popes. One could almost consent to part with the simple symbolical rites instituted by the Lord, if thereby the subsequent perversion of them by sacerdotalism could have been escaped. Even among the reformed churches, the professional clergy have been far from an unmixed blessing. Reasonable and scriptural as it is that those whose whole lives are devoted to the service of the Church should receive a fitting maintenance from the Church, the existence of a class of men consecrated to this service almost ensures among them, human nature being what it is, the presence of some who serve for filthy lucre. Apart from this painful scandal, class interests, class prejudices, spring up; theological prejudices are stereotyped; freedom of thought and of speech are hampered. Even when there is true piety, conscientious conviction, and earnest zeal, one can hardly, with reason, expect the perpetual freshness of spontaneous enthusiasm in the routine services of a paid minister. If a Christian teacher gives up his liberty to be silent, and engages to speak at stated times, he will sometimes have to speak when he would rather hold his tongue. His utterances will sometimes be the mere echo and reverberation of his past convictions, instead of living words springing up from fresh inspiration. Add to all these objections the inevitable tendency of a professional clergy to engross the whole time and attention of the Church; so that the spiritual experience and insight of the so-called laity is for the most part shut up in the silence of their own hearts, having no opportunity of utterance. Truly when one contrasts all this with the simplicity, the sincerity, the spontaneity, the freedom,

the spirituality, the fresh living inspiration of the quaker meeting, one asks oneself whether it would not be a blessed exchange to get rid of the formalism of liturgies and set services, the weariness of shallow and bigoted sermons, at the risk of sometimes having to be content with a wholly silent meeting?

It is but a dream. When we wake up and look at the facts, the dream vanishes. It is possible to believe that God did speak to the Church and the world by George Fox and his comrades; but it is not possible to regard the quaker Church of the past hundred and fifty years as in any special sense the recipient of Divine enlightenment, the temple of the Holy Spirit, the sanctuary where Divine oracles are given forth. Theoretically the quaker way of worship may be the true way, but practically for this long time there has been no light shining forth from thence, no Divine Voice heard therefrom, for the guidance of the Church and conversion of the world. Tossed on a troubled ocean of doubts and difficulties, the seekers of this generation look this way and that to find the right path; some in despair of other help return to the Catholic Church; some strenuously cleave to the letter of Scripture; some wander away into rationalism. In the midst of all this upheaval, all this unrest, these agonies of doubt, this vehement longing for some light from heaven, the descendants of the Children of the Light shrink within the quiet of their separate meetings, conscious that they have no Divine message for the world. If one enters a quaker meeting, he hears no inspired voice, no fresh oracle; all is silent, or the silence is only broken by the faint and feeble echo of past inspiration. The teaching of history and

of fact outweighs theory. It is known in Christian experience that the spiritual way of worship has no exclusive enjoyment of the Spirit; that God does deign to meet and bless the worshippers who make use of set forms and symbolic rites; that through the ministration of a salaried and professional clergy He does convert sinners, and feed His children with spiritual food. In the last century the Wesleys and Whitfield, "hireling priests" as they were, were chosen of God to do at least as great a work as Fox accomplished a century before; and, unlike Fox's work, Methodism in its second century shows no signs of decay, but numbers its adherents by tens of millions. In our own generation, when we think of those who have been leaders of religious thought, the names of Newman, Pusey, and Keble; Maurice, Stanley, and F. W. Robertson, and many more of the "hireling clergy" readily occur to us; no Quaker, since Gurney, has attained reputation as a religious teacher outside his own sect.

Thus we are conducted to an inquiry which touches the heart of the matter. Granted that the misuse of means is sadly frequent, is it contrary to the will of God that the Church should employ in worship, various means adapted to varying ages, conditions and circumstances? In other words, may man take any active part in the public worship of God, and preaching of the truth, or must he be entirely passive, except as he is consciously at the time the recipient and organ of an inward Divine influence? George Fox held that man must be passive: he could not preach nor pray in his own will, or at the bidding of other men. But he was compelled by the nature of the case to abandon this principle in one par-

ticular. The Children of the Light must "Keep their meetings:" they must assemble at the appointed hour in the pre-determined place. They were not to sit at home, waiting for a special inward impulse to go to meeting; but they must go, habitually, regularly, in obedience to a general and external rule. In this case the habit is recognised as reasonable, right, and a Christian duty, apart from a special and distinct perception of obligation on each several occasion. If their attendance at worship is secured by the ordinary exercise of human intelligence and will, acting under the general conviction of religious duty, why should the operation of that intelligence and will be deemed an impediment to the reception of the influences of the Spirit? In all other departments of human life, accumulated experiences produce expectations and habits, which become guides of conduct. Living forces work channels for themselves, and by their own action help to predetermine their future course. Is it then certainly unlawful to permit the operation of this natural force in the Church and in its worship? In parliaments, in political meetings, in meetings of all kinds, universal experience has found that the appointment of a president is favourable to good order and the attainment of the object of the meeting. Those who anticipate that it may be their duty to speak in such meetings, far from thinking it wrong to make preparation, would in most cases feel it highly culpable not to study the subject, and sometimes the very words beforehand. When the object of the meeting is to impart instruction, the previous selection of those most qualified to teach, and definite pre-arrangement with them, is recognised as the best means for accomplish-

ing the end. Routine, formalism, the blunting of sensibility by custom, are disadvantages which we have to struggle against in politics, education, medicine, commerce, in every department of human life, as well as in religion. Everywhere the tendency to act from mere habit has to be steadily opposed by an effort to gain an ever fresh perception of the present facts and of our real relations to them. How often has adherence to fixed rules and traditional usages, lost campaigns, ruined nations, delayed reforms, perpetuated human ignorance and misery ! Nevertheless order, pre-arrangement, the use of means which experience has shown to be suitable, are right everywhere else ; why should they be excluded from the meeting for worship ?

The quaker doctrine does not permit the application of this general law to religious worship. They believe that the Christian ministry cannot be rightly exercised except under the direct and immediate influence of the Spirit. "If it be the divine will that they should minister, they believe it will be manifested to them by the divine Spirit, when they are to speak, whom they are to address, and what things they are to express."¹ "When he apprehends that the secret command has gone forth towards him, *vocally* to address, either the congregation in preaching, or the Almighty in prayer : he obeys the mandate of his Lord, and speaks as the Spirit gives him utterance." This description of quaker experience implies a special and peculiar inspiration, not given to other ministers, not enjoyed by themselves at other times. Admitted that they who have not had this experience cannot make their want of it a rule to measure by ; yet

¹ *Observations*, Chap. V.

even so, we are not altogether without the means of testing the reality of the Divine afflatus. The Spirit is given not to the preacher only, but in some manner and measure to the hearer also. We are bidden to try the spirits. Gurney in this immediate connection points out that the spiritually minded hearer can discern when the services degenerate into the use of words without life. Judged by this test, it would be difficult to sustain the claim of the Quaker ministers to be favoured with a peculiar inspiration, superior in kind or degree, to that bestowed upon other Christian ministers. Again, it is not easy to understand why this peculiar inspiration should be confined to the meeting for worship, as it seems to be by the admission that "in *teaching* a much greater liberty is given for the use of our merely human faculties, than in the higher and more important office of prophecy or preaching."¹ Was Joseph John Gurney specially inspired when he was preaching, and not inspired at all, or only in quite an inferior sense, when he wrote those books which helped to change the whole current of modern quakerism? If so, it seems a pity that his sermons were not taken down in shorthand, and printed; instead of works which are evidently the products of "merely human faculties."

With a profound sense of the importance and the mystery of the subject, with an earnest desire to avoid rash judgments, and any word which would grieve a sincere believer, it must be pointed out that there is at least a danger of superstition in the Quaker's belief. What is inspiration? Who can tell? We may not be able to understand the mystery, but we may know the experi-

¹ *Ibid* page 137.

ence. That God does teach and move us by His Spirit, no Christian can doubt. But who can discriminate the point where human activity must cease, in order that the Divine work may begin? Or, is there such a point? Is it true that the activity of the human intelligence and the human will is an impediment to the Divine influence? "Work out your own salvation," saith the Scripture, "for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do." When temptation comes we do not wait for a separate Divine admonition to resist: in our very recognition that it is a temptation to evil, the Divine command to resist is conveyed. When in secular business, or social life, a call to duty comes, we do not wait for an inward impulse before we discharge it. The sight of our duty is itself the voice of God to us; and if we are slack in obedience, conscience is not slow in condemnation. Our whole life seems to be so much of one piece, of one texture, that it is difficult to receive the doctrine that one part of life is subject to Divine influence in a manner altogether peculiar. One imagines the Quaker minister sitting in silence among his fellow-worshippers, meditating on divine truth, or thinking of the spiritual needs of those present. His heart warms within him: he longs to impart some consolation or instruction or warning, and he feels an impulse to speak. Need we infer an intimation of the Divine will, different altogether in kind from that which the same man feels when he is moved to give bread to the hungry? And why should not similar circumstances, the sight of a waiting congregation sitting at his feet, convey to a Christian minister of another denomination, an equal conviction that he is under a Divine command to teach them: even though

he is one whose whole life is devoted to this work, though he has been praying and studying for days beforehand with this very prospect before him, and comes ready prepared with text and sermon? That is the question between the Quaker and other Christians. Does the use of the faculties which God has bestowed, in the way in which it is right for us to use them in all other affairs, become a hindrance which prevents the reception of His best inspirations in public prayer and preaching?

There does seem to be at least a danger of superstition in the Quaker views. In their first uprising they were carried away into an excess of utterance, sometimes mistaking for divine inspiration what was the outcome of their own heated imaginations. In later times the mistake seems to have been on the side of excessive restraint. Dr. Ash, one of Gurney's intimate friends, tells us that in his childhood though he was blessed with godly parents and a circle of relatives and friends, most of whom were of a like character, no one attempted to impress his opening mind with divine truth, or to draw his affections towards God and Christ; he never heard the voice of prayer either in his own family or in those of his pious relatives, and no one ever taught him to pray. Afterwards, when he had become a living Christian, the ideas which he had imbibed as a Friend led him for a long time to regard specific acts of prayer as warranted only by some special anointing or impulse of the Holy Spirit: so that not until he had known for almost twenty years what it was to lift up his heart to God, had he ever ventured (with perhaps a solitary exception) to bend his knees before Him, or to give vocal

utterance to the desires of his soul.¹ This glimpse into the interior of quaker family life and personal religion, during the early years of the century, helps us to understand how their peculiar belief in inspiration frequently reduced meetings to total silence for years together, until they ceased to be held; a result which does not tend to remove the suspicion that there is some admixture of error in the quaker theory.

Nevertheless whoso steadily looks into the discipline and practice of the society of Friends will see much to admire, something perhaps to envy. This spectacle of human souls bound together in closest brotherhood by a common faith: all free to speak, all free to be silent; their worship, in spirit and in truth—Christ Himself by His Spirit presiding in their midst; their discipline, the tender faithful watching over one another in brotherly love, with the persistent resolve to clear the Church from all participation in iniquity: their doctrine, in intention at least, nothing more nor less than the whole truth of New Testament Christianity, interpreted by the help of the Holy Spirit: it is in conception a lofty ideal, and if but imperfectly realised, is it not so with all ideals? Granted that as an ideal it is not altogether suited to every age and grade of humanity, we may yet agree that it offers suggestions which the other Christian churches would do well to consider, perhaps in part to follow. While the great majority of Christians are still dominated by Ecclesiasticism and Biblicalism, it would be premature to discuss whether in the reign of a purer and more enlightened Christianity, traditional usages which have been so terribly abused will be altogether

¹ *A Retrospect of my Life*, by Edward Ash, M.A., pp. 4 and 12.

discarded. When we consider the immense, the incalculable evils, which have resulted from sacramental and sacerdotal perversions of Christ's teaching, we owe a large debt of gratitude to those who have taught, and proved by a noble example, that even if a paid ministry and ceremonial observances are lawful and useful, they are certainly not indispensable to the Christian life. We may leave this subject in hearty accordance with Joseph John Gurney's conviction that the "religious peculiarities," whether of the Quakers, or of other Christian churches, are of minor importance, and can very well be left over for further consideration, until the fundamental basis of our religious belief and life is clearly ascertained and securely fixed.

Gurney died in 1847: with that date let our historical retrospect come to an end. About ten years later an advertisement offering money prizes for essays on the causes of the decline of quakerism called attention to the low condition of the society. Rowntree's instructive book, and a number of pamphlets, were published in consequence of this invitation. Since that time there has been an increase of activity among the Friends. Home and foreign mission work has been undertaken. Research has been made into the archives of the society, and many interesting books throwing light upon its early history have been printed. Philanthropic work has been maintained and increased. Even into the political arena members of the society have descended. Theological inquiry has re-awakened. The appearance in 1885 of "*A Reasonable Faith*," the joint work of three members of the society; and in 1887 of "*Old-fashioned Quakerism*," by William Pollard, indicate a

reaction against Gurneyism, and a partial reversion towards the faith of the early Quakers. But into recent and still pending discussions it is not advisable for us to enter. Quakerism has been sufficiently exhibited to prepare us for the only inquiry which is of vital concern ; whether the story of George Fox and his followers contains any spiritual help for the Church of this age ; whether the inward Light which shone in him, shines for us also ; and whether we may hope that its increasing radiance will dispel the dark shadows now gathering so thickly around our nineteenth century Christianity. These are the inquiries which will occupy the succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE INWARD LIGHT.

THE mission of George Fox was to direct all men to the "inward Light," "the manifestation of Christ in the heart," the Spirit of God, man's true teacher. This was the revelation given to him, by which he was saved, in which he lived the Christian life. This was his message to the Church and the world, which attracted thousands to his side, by which a new church was founded, a church manifestly inspired by the indwelling Spirit of Christ, and for a time, too brief a time, holding out the hope of a universal diffusion of spiritual Christianity. When faith in the inward Light declined, the Church built upon it declined. In the history of quakerism there is nothing of vital importance except this. If this Light was true then, it is true now ; and certainly it is not less needed to-day, not less precious, not less important than in Fox's days. Let us then endeavour, in the first place, to ascertain what Fox himself meant by the Light within.

Among Christians there is no controversy about the existence of an inward Light. It is a doctrine of the Bible ; all the churches receive it ; it is a fact of experience. Baxter and the presbyterians did not differ from Fox and the Quakers, in that the one party believed only in the Bible, the other only in the Spirit. Both parties accepted both truths. Their difference was

as to the order and connection of these truths, their relative importance and practical application in the spiritual life. In order to estimate this difference, and determine which side was nearer to the truth, we must be acquainted with the real inner meaning of both. What was Christianity in the inmost convictions, and the consequent desires and efforts, hopes and fears of the Puritans? What was the range of their thoughts upon religious themes, and what its practical outcome? We begin with the Puritans, because quakerism is only intelligible, when seen against the background of the puritanism from the midst of which it emerged.

Theologically, the puritan divine took his stand upon the Bible. This was to him the revelation of God. All religious truth was stored up in Holy Scripture; all the words of Holy Scripture were infallible. The inspiration by which the writers of Scripture were guided was in its nature altogether distinct from the influence of the Spirit working in the hearts of ordinary believers. By some, natural human reason, by others, reason under the guiding of the Spirit, was regarded as the recipient of the Scripture revelation; but in neither view must man's reason presume to erect itself into a judge of the plain statements of the Bible. Clear and exact words of Holy Writ are the final and supreme authority, before which the believer must prostrate himself in unquestioning submission; however dark, mysterious and terrible these words may be; even should they seem to contradict not only ordinary human reason, but the same reason filled with all the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. Did a doubt arise in the mind whether a particular dogma, or the whole dog-

matic scheme thus obtained, was true, it must be stilled by remembering that "thus saith the Lord." If the claim of the Scriptures to be accepted as in this sense the Word of God was challenged, this was met by an appeal to the evidences, external and internal, to miracles and prophecy, and to the manifestly divine character of the revelation. But it must be remembered that the Puritan, speaking generally, did not go so far back as that; the divine authority of the Bible was with him an axiom. He did not enter into an examination of the proofs. Here and there one, like Richard Baxter, felt that this region of thought ought to be thoroughly explored, but it was not thoroughly explored; as a matter of fact, it was altogether neglected by the great majority. The verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, their infallibility, their supreme authority, were fundamental in the Protestant theology. Hence, although he acknowledged the existence of an inward Light, to the Puritan the Word of God was the greater Light which ruled in the spiritual day; unto which the measure of spiritual illumination vouchsafed to believers, could not but be inferior, both in degree and authority.

The Puritans were not all divines. Besides the preachers, and educated laymen who could study theology, there were the simple folk, who heard sermons, and could, some of them, just read their Bibles. What was the character of the religious life, among unlearned as well as learned, which was supported by the puritan exposition of Scripture truth? This is a wide question, and we must remember that wherever we turn our eyes, whether to the ancient Catholic and Orthodox Churches, or to the many ramifications of Protestantism, we see

everywhere evidences of a Christian life which cannot be attributed to the distinctive theologies of the several churches. If then we discern a peculiar type in puritanism to which it is necessary to call attention, it must not be forgotten that among the Puritans also, there were those who were better than we should expect from their creed. Still it is needful to ascertain the peculiar characteristics of the puritan religion, a comprehension of which is necessary to our inquiry.

To the puritan, God, Eternity, Heaven and Hell, the Law which condemned him, the Atonement which secured remission of its sentence for a favoured few, the awful decrees of predestination and reprobation, were all of them infinite external realities. These realities were infinite. His own personal existence was infinitely insignificant ; nothing was great in him, but his guilt ; this indeed as an offence against God attained to a kind of reflected infinity, through which it deserved an infinite punishment. But apart from this, man was a worm, dust, contemptible beneath the power of language to express. Between this despicable creature and Almighty God, there was an infinite distance. These realities were external. Except his sin, all were outside him, not belonging to his personal being, but existing independently and objectively. Even the work of Redeeming Love was altogether outside the region of human experience ; it was an act of the Divine Sovereignty quite independent of human merit and demerit. The Atonement was a great transaction between two persons in the Godhead, the Father and the Son. Historically, it was an external work, performed by the incarnate Son at a remote place in a long ago age. For obtaining the

benefit of this salvation, man was dependent upon an arbitrary decree of which he could know nothing; and actual realisation of the blessing came as the sequence of a personal belief in which nothing of the nature of a moral cause could be admitted. It is true that sanctification was regarded as a necessary conclusion of the redeeming process; but altogether as a consequence, never as a cause or reason, or co-ordinate part, of the process. Thus, practically, the one momentous question, was, am I one of the elect? Next to that, was the inquiry as to the nature of justifying faith, and the possibility of its attainment. It was a religion in which the future issues of eternal happiness or misery out-balanced the present moral distinctions between good and evil. After all, the saved were not saved because they were morally better than the lost. The lost were not lost because they were morally worse than the saved. Then, the eternity of the torture! Of course these Puritans could not comprehend their own words; they had no more knowledge of eternity than we have. But they thought they had a clear and definite knowledge of it. It is difficult for us to comprehend how the total effect of this theological system could have been other than one of two results, either the hardening of the heart, or madness.

What was the practical outcome of a religion of this type? Granted that many of the Puritans passed through these gloomy regions of thought into a personal experience, wherein religion became of a different type; where faith became child-like, penitence blossomed out into reformation, where confidence in the Father of our spirits through Jesus Christ grew into filial love; so

that the new life of the children of God was born, and nourished, and grew toward perfection. It still remains clear that this method of contemplating eternal realities, had a strong tendency to make escape from future punishment the first great object, and to reduce personal character to a secondary consideration. If therefore, the religion of many was grounded in fear rather than in faith and in love; if it degenerated into formal profession instead of producing a new life; if this formal profession was frequently stained by inconsistencies and conscious or unconscious hypocrisies, this result only proves that human nature cannot be delivered from moral evil by an appeal to self-interest, even though upon an infinite scale.

Quakerism was a recoil from the extremes of puritanism. Comparing the two, we at once perceive three important differences. The Puritan's religion began in the contemplation of an external circle of infinite dimensions. Fox found the commencement of his religion within himself, in a point of light, a point of contact between his soul and God, a revelation which made him see himself as he was, a sinner before God. Heaven, Hell, Eternity, Judgment to come, all that vast sweep of imagination which appalled and oft-times paralyzed the Puritan, Fox lost sight of it all, in this one clear convincing all-absorbing consciousness of the present fact that he was a sinner, that he saw his sin in the light of God. It was not that he denied, or doubted the vastness of realities: they all existed, but how could they exist between him and the present reality, the coming with God's sentence of condemnation in his own conscience? In the way of looking at redemption

By Christ, there was an equally well-marked contrast. The Puritan's redemption was an external transaction, accomplished at Calvary sixteen hundred years before his Saviour was the glorified King far above, invisible in the distant heaven. To Fox his redemption was a process carried on within his own soul. His Saviour was Christ the Light dwelling in him, and expelling the moral evil. "Do ye not see it?" he cried out, "for he saw the life of Christ, how it cleanseth the heart." Again, Fox held the historic belief of the Puritan as firmly as he, but the historic belief was not enough for him, indeed, it was worth nothing without a present experience of the cleansing power of Christ within the soul. The chief distinction was this. The Puritan's great anxiety was to escape the damnation of hell. He must forsake his sins and struggle against his evil propensities, but he did not expect to be fully delivered from them while in this life. Damnation, therefore, was with him an after thought. The first necessity was to secure safety. This to him was to Fox utterly *absurd*. His repentance would lead him into an *utter* deception. He said that all *so-called* taught were "*pleading for sin*." They would plead for sin but they pleaded the practical impossibility of obtaining pardon. The *Satan* possessed by a man, a curse on him who still *thinks* is *cleansed from sin*. Fox denied this supposed impossibility. He would obtain deliverance from moral evil, he could not wait with nothing less, for him salvation was to be secured from sinning, filled with the love of God, and the indwelling and perfecting by the indwelling Spirit.

One difference between the two systems of thought is great and grave. We live now in an age when Calvary

is no longer predominant, when much that was strange and new in Fox's teaching has been long familiar to religious minds, require an effort to realise how immense was the change from the awfully dark and terrible dogmas which the Puritan deduced by an iron logic from the words of St. Paul, to the free, joyous, hopeful life of Christian experience into which Fox conducted the Children of the Light. Between the two conceptions of Christianity, the two methods of seeking salvation, the two ways of living the Christian life, who in these days can hesitate? But a decision in Fox's favour on these points does not necessarily shut us up to acceptance of his doctrine of the inward Light. Why did not Fox oppose and amend the Calvinistic theology by showing that a better system can be derived from Holy Scripture? Many have laboured in that field, both before and since his time, and with much success. The Bible is certainly strongly Calvinistic—when John Calvin has the manipulating of its texts. St. Paul, and not St. Paul alone, furnishes abundant material for that system. But the Bible is not what the Protestants would have it to be, one book, emanating from one author, expressing one great idea. It is a literature, representing different stages in the progress of human thought, diverse views of truth as seen by different minds. If it be an article of faith that the Divine Spirit inspiring the several authors, gave to the collection a unity in which one part is balanced against another, resulting in a wisdom of the whole larger and deeper than the writers of the parts conceived; then we must also believe that the same Spirit can enable other interpreters to draw from its inexhaustible treasures other dogmatic systems, superior to that of the Puritans.

George Fox might have adopted this method. He could have derived his system from the Scriptures, for when in possession of it, he found it shining out in every book, almost in every page of the sacred volume. Instead of thus making his first appeal to, and drawing all his authority from, the Book acknowledged by all to be divine, he asserted another authority, an inward Light, a direct teaching from God, superior, as he said, to the Scripture. Why did he take a course so perilous, so certain to give offence, so hard to justify, against opponents ?

The answer which we get from George Fox is that the fact was so. God did teach him by His Spirit. The Light shone in his soul, and he saw the truth. He did not get it from the Bible, though it was there. He knew it first by revelation, and then, with the revelation enlightening him, he could see the truth in the Scriptures. This is his doctrine of the inward Light. Was it true, or a delusion ?

Here we are confronted by the obvious explanation of unconscious cerebration. There was nothing new in Fox's revelations. They were new to him, but they had been given to others before him, and were plainly taught in the Scriptures. From a child Fox had known the Scriptures, for years he had pored over the pages of his Bible, until he knew it almost by heart. At the moment when the revelation flashed into his mind, he forgot that he had read it in the Bible. When it came it was but the revival of a previous impression, which he had forgotten ; and therefore the notion that he was the subject of an immediate Divine inspiration was a delusion.

The explanation is plausible, but will it account for

the fact? What Fox asserted was that he saw the truth itself, saw it in himself, saw it in a light which came from God. This is something more than knowing the truth because it is written in the Bible. Take now some elementary moral precept, such as, "Thou shalt not steal." This precept is contained in the decalogue. To the Puritan, the decalogue was the source of its authority. There could not be a more awful sanction than the very voice of God heard in thunder on Sinai, than words of God engraved with the Divine finger on the tables of stone. But Fox made the dread discovery that God had written this precept in his heart; he knew it was true because it was written there; he was not dependent upon the pentateuch for this Divine voice, this word of God; he heard it in himself, and knew, knew infallibly, that it was God's command to him. This is a fact of spiritual experience which the psychological theory of unconscious cerebration cannot explain away. It is not an experience peculiar to Fox and a few others. All men have it in some degree, or may have it: and unless they have had it, it is useless to discuss the subject with them. Let us look at the fact once more.

"Thou shalt not steal." Learnt by rote in the catechism, read in the Bible, or as inscribed above the altar, enforced by the assurance that these are God's words, expressive of His will, this is the letter: it is outside the man. Unless there is something within him which corresponds thereto, and enters into its spirit, his obedience to the command is almost devoid of moral qualities. God commands this; he is told. God is infinitely strong, able to inflict immeasurable penalties for disobedience, therefore steal not. Go round and round these thoughts

as long as you please, nothing better than a prudent regard to one's own interest will result. "Thou shalt not steal." Reason takes the precept in hand: weighs it, measures it, defines property, calculates the consequences of infringing the law, discerns that stealing is seldom safe and profitable to the thief, and always injurious to society. Reason concludes that the greatest happiness of the greatest number is promoted by observance of the rule; to which, in the abstract, it therefore gives a cordial support. When reason has done its best, it finds the precept to be an induction of intelligent self-interest, morally indistinguishable from compliance with superior force. "Thou shalt not steal." There comes an actual temptation; the conscience is awakened; it is no longer a subject of speculative inquiry and abstract interest but a case for practical decision: shall I, or shall I not? Then the voice within is heard, which is not our own; then the law written in the heart burns as with fire, and we feel as well as see the command. It is no longer an outward rule, the expression of a mere arbitrary will. It is the law of God; it is the law of our nature; it is the truth itself. This is immediate revelation, for it requires no proof beyond itself. It is the ultimate foundation. There is nothing beyond this. We want no more than to know the truth in the felt presence of God.

The existence of an inward light of this kind is generally recognised, under the names of conscience, the moral sense, spiritual intuitions, natural religion, the "not ourselves which makes for righteousness." That this inward perception of moral distinctions, accompanied by a sense of moral obligation, was at the root of Fox's

belief respecting the inward light, is shown by his constant appeal to conscience as the light shining in the hearts of others. So far his opponents agreed with him. They too acknowledged the light which enables men to know right from wrong; but they set comparatively little store by it. In their opinion it was only a natural light, a created light, a property of human nature, the chief use of which was to convict of sin. Fox, on the contrary, regarded it as the light of God shining in the human soul; the purpose of which was salvation. It was not natural, not created; it was nothing less than the Eternal Word, "the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world;" that is Christ Jesus, not now known after the flesh, but in the Spirit, dwelling in the heart.

Clearly, the inward Light of George Fox contained two elements. It was not a simple, spiritual experience alone; it was spiritual experience impregnated by Scripture teaching. Until he had this spiritual enlightenment, he did not understand the Scriptures; they were to him mere external words with which he struggled in vain. But when light came, and he saw the truth, what he saw was not a revelation given for the first time to him, but the revelation previously given to others, and recorded in the Holy Scriptures. If the reader will turn back to the third chapter of this book, or better still, read Fox's own account in his Journal, he will see that Fox never attempted to unravel these two threads, which were intertwined at every point in the line of his experience, from the moment he first was conscious that God was teaching him by His Spirit; and indeed before he was conscious of this divine teaching.

There is little difficulty in apprehending what Fox meant by his "revelations." He by no means intended a communication of a divine secret made to him, and denied to others. He took no account of priority of time. As a matter of fact the revelations granted to him were, for the most part, granted to his fellow believers also, and had been given long ages before, to apostles and prophets; only they had been lost sight of during the apostacy. They were recorded in the writings of the Old and New Testaments, but that did not make them revelations to him, or any one else. The revelations came when the Spirit of God "opened" his heart or "opened" the Scriptures, so that he saw the truth, and knew that it was the truth of God. Sometimes the revelation came without his having, at the time, any passage of Scripture in his mind; at other times, the openings were openings of the Scriptures. Fox did not value the one kind more than the other. What he did value was the certainty that God Himself was teaching him by His Spirit.

We shall miss the full meaning of the inward Light if we regard it exclusively as the communication of knowledge. The Light is not only revealing, it is purifying: it dispels the darkness and expels all evil creatures that cannot bear the light. This Fox expressed by another favourite figure: the seed. The Spirit is in the heart like a seed, which, if lodged in good soil, will grow, and spring up, and bring forth fruit. This was to Fox the one thing needful. Mere knowledge was to him a small matter. The one great longing of his soul was to be delivered from all moral impurity, to be like Christ, and to do Christ's work in the world. When we have

got to the centre of Fox's life, and look at things from his standpoint, it is not so difficult to appreciate the sublime audacity of his assurance that he was inspired of God. He did not attempt to explain the number of the beast; he did not profess to interpret prophecy, and foretell how long the world is to last; he seemed to care little or nothing about the secrets of the future—with what body we shall be raised, or what heaven is like. He would not dogmatise on the mysteries of the Trinity in unity, and the divine foreknowledge. But he knew by the light of God shining in his soul, the difference between sin and holiness, and he knew that God willed that he should be holy; he knew that Christ died in order that he might be holy. When he saw these divine realities, righteousness, truth, purity, love, revealed to him in Christ Jesus, he had no doubt, no hesitation. He was sure he was inspired of God; that God was working in him, that the light was Christ within.

This survey leads to the conclusion that Fox's doctrine of the inward Light is a true but incomplete account of a real spiritual experience. There are intuitions of spiritual and moral truth; there is a verification in experience of the teaching of Scripture. But neither Fox, Barclay, nor Penn succeeded in freeing the subject from obscurity. What are these intuitions? How far do they reach, and do they suffice as the basis of our spiritual life, without the teaching of Scripture? No attempt was made by the early Quakers to analyse their own inward light, and to determine what part of it was independent of all historical religion. They accepted the Scriptures as divinely inspired, and willingly agreed to have their doctrines tested by this standard; but

neither they nor the Puritans critically examined the nature and grounds of Scriptural authority. An unquestioning faith in the Bible, as verbally inspired, and miraculously infallible, is no longer in possession of the field: and it becomes, therefore, the more necessary that we should investigate with the greatest care, the nature and the limits of this inward Light, and also its relations to the Bible and to Christianity.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON SELF-EVIDENT RELIGIOUS TRUTH.

Is there any self-evident religious truth? Before this question can be discussed, we require some explanation of this phrase, "self-evident." Self-evident is self-known, known by and from itself, requiring no argument, no external proof, to produce conviction. Barclay's statement clearly expresses this meaning. "This divine revelation and inward illumination is that which is evident and clear of itself; forcing by its own evidence and clearness, the well-disposed understanding to assent, irresistibly moving the same thereunto, even as the common principles of natural truths do move and incline the mind to a natural assent; as, that the whole is greater than its part; that two contradictions can neither be both true nor both false." The definition is clearness itself, but a remark may be made upon the illustrations. These are taken from the abstract reasonings of mathematics and logic. To a scholar and philosopher like Barclay, such illustrations of his principle came readiest to hand, but the greater part of mankind are neither philosophers nor scholars, and if self-evident truth is of a kind which requires the capacity of vividly apprehending mental abstractions before it can be appreciated, the majority of the human race are destitute of it. That such was not Barclay's view is plain from his

doctrine of the universality of this saving light. There is, however, no necessity to confine him or ourselves to the particular instances he has added to his definition. Every truth clearly apprehended in consciousness, every well-defined fact of experience is self-evident. A tooth-ache is self-evident as well as a triangle. Truth to be self-evident must be given in consciousness, and so given as to be clearly seen, certainly known. At bottom, consciousness is the measure of self-evidence. This is expressed in the proverbial saying, "As sure as I am of my own existence;" a degree of certainty which cannot be exceeded.

Having explained the term, the question put is, are there any self-evident truths in religion? On the threshold we meet the obvious objection that in no other region of thought are there so many diverse, even contradictory opinions. Surely if religious truth be self-evident, all men should see it; at least all whose mental capacity is sufficiently developed to exercise itself upon religious problems; yet, judging men by their confessions and their conduct, some see nothing at all in this direction: the many see but little and that confusedly; the few whose vision is clear enough to produce marked effects in character and conduct, do not agree in the account they give of what they see. This difficulty sends us back to reconsider. What is self-evident truth? It is truth evident by itself, to me. I am the subject in which this object inheres, it is seen and known as a part of my consciousness. There is a common assumption that the constitution of human nature is the same in all men, on the ground of which I expect you to see as I see; you expect the same of me: and both of us expect

the agreement of all others. But this assumption is itself neither a self-evident truth, nor a demonstrated inference from complete induction; it is nothing more than a good working hypothesis verified to a considerable extent. In this particular case, is it a reasonable assumption that, if there be self-evident religious truth, it will be at once self-evident to everybody, as the self-evident truths of mathematics are? On the contrary, while there is no reason whatever, apart from experience, to expect that this should be so, experience itself, without straying beyond the boundaries of self-evident truth, gives a caution against the expectation. In regard to numbers, lines, spaces, I find myself quite indifferent, having within myself neither preference nor aversion. A circle is seen to be a circle, its centre, its radii, are so, as I see them; and I have no wish that they should be otherwise. But in regard to moral and religious truths the case is different; I find myself capable of seeing these as they are, and yet of wishing them to be otherwise; I detect in myself different dispositions towards them at different times; the truths remaining unchanged. I look out upon the world and see men are, some good, some bad; a distinction of quality which affects their mental capacity for religious truth. Hence to require universal assent as the mark of self-evident truth in religion would not be reasonable. Let it be supposed that one half, or one tenth, or any smaller fraction of mankind do see religious truth; what they see, they see; and the blindness of the rest detracts not from their vision. The want of universal agreement should least of all be urged by those who have accepted the doctrine of evolution, which recognises the development of new varieties in an ascending scale of being.

Is there self-evident religious truth? There is. The moral qualities called right and wrong, the sense of obligation to choose the right, and the self-condemnation when the wrong has been chosen, these are self-evident. In regard to these, there is little occasion to claim exemption from the requirement of universality. If men do not see these truths because they will not, they are bad men, and their dissent may be disregarded. The universal agreement of the "well-disposed," as Barclay has put it, is enough to satisfy the requirements of reason. If there are savage tribes, and individuals in the midst of civilization, apparently destitute of the moral sense, the non-existence in these cases cannot negative its conscious existence in others. But indeed, the general consensus of mankind has so confirmed the particular attestation of conscience itself in each individual, that it is unnecessary to labour this point. More than once in the course of the present volume, it has seemed important to utter a warning against the danger which arises from the impossibility of discussing religious, moral, as also political and social, questions, in a disinterested spirit. Man is interested in these matters, and it is folly to overlook the fact. On the other hand, it is perhaps not quite needless to guard against excessive distrust on this account. Because in any judgment between man and man, a judge whose interest strongly inclines to one side is thereby exposed to suspicion, and a plaintiff though honest can hardly be expected to estimate his own case with absolute impartiality, a habit is formed of associating the ideas of self-interest and untrustworthiness. Transferring this to the inner sphere, we may be afraid to repose confidence in our

own consciousness when it appears to give evidence in support of our desires. Reasonable caution no one can blame, but it is well to remember, before the testimony of human nature is ruled out of court, that there is no other witness who can be summoned. All experience comes to, is enacted in this nature; and if it is to be distrusted, then universal scepticism results. However, there is a consideration in the present case which relieves us from uneasiness on this score. These self-evident religious truths are not always and in every man in accordance with supposed self-interest; but probably at least as much or more opposed to human desire as supported thereby. Who is there that has not at some time, either on his own account, or on that of others, felt the awful burden of moral obligation and dread of possible consequences from its violation, to an extent which has strongly tempted him to wish that it were an illusion? How many a guilty wretch would give all that he has, and life itself, to know that there is no day of judgment. Even those who have no fear on their own account, if they have learned to love their neighbours as themselves, can hardly be altogether ignorant of a similar feeling. Besides this foreboding of the future, the law of moral obligation shackles the appetites and inclinations, which chafe under its restraints and would gladly throw them off if possible. Looking at the human race as a whole, it is incredible that a moral law which has been admitted so widely, and for so long ages, can be a mere figment of the imagination. It thwarts my inclinations, it comes between me and my pleasures, it sets me painful and apparently impossible tasks, it harasses me with self-reproach, it humiliates me with self-disgust, it will

neither let me live in peace, nor allow me to expect a quiet refuge in the grave. In the fearful expectation of what may come after, even the best of men, those whom we call saints, take refuge in the hope of infinite mercy, outside and beyond the scope of strict law. It is true that we are not disinterested in this matter; that, on the contrary, we are so supremely interested as to make a feeling of self-distrust naturally arise. Yet our desires and our fears, our inclinations and our aversions, so counter-balance each other as to dispel the suspicion that self-interest invalidates our mental judgments. In view of this it may confidently be asserted that the religious truths which have been indicated are not less self-evident than mathematical axioms; the distinction between right and wrong is seen as clearly as that two straight lines cannot enclose space, the obligation to do the right and refuse the wrong is as certain as that two and two make four.

No theory of the genesis of the moral sense can invalidate this certainty. Barelay is right in calling it revelation, "immediate revelation;" for revelation is the unveiling and disclosing of what before was hidden and unseen. The totality of being is infinite, we see that part which comes within the range of our vision; and the enlargement of our seeing power is to us revelation. By this perceptivity of right and wrong a new world is disclosed, a whole moral and spiritual world, of realities beautiful and terrible. This moral world is immediately known; not by hearsay, nor through long chain of reasoning: we are in contact with it; it is given in our own consciousness, and possesses therefore all the certainty of consciousness, the surest certainty, both in kind and

degree, known to man. No hypothesis of the gradual evolution of conscience affects this certainty. Whether slowly educed or instantaneously inspired, the moral sense exists, and by it right and wrong are known. The treachery of Judas, Messalina's profligacy, the cruelty of Ivan the Terrible, on the one hand; on the other the virtue of Marcus Aurelius, the philanthropy of John Howard, the self-sacrifice of Father Damien, these are spiritual realities, no more to be explained away or weakened by theories about origin, than are Alps and Himalayas. They exist, and we see them. It may be that the human eye has arisen from a long series of ancestral eyes, beginning from a rudimentary organ, hardly of vision, but merely of sensitiveness to the distinction between light and darkness. The evolution of the bodily eye does not throw doubt upon the reality of light and darkness. However it came to be, the eye sees; and vision reveals land, and sea, and sky, and all the worlds. So the spiritual vision is vision, however it originated. Once in possession of the moral sense, we have a real experience of a new sphere of being; and the speculative inquiry as to the genesis of the faculty can in no way affect the truth of the phenomena it reveals.

All human knowledge is relative: nothing is known by man except through the senses and the mind. Why should a shade of doubt be cast over moral truth on this account? Heat and cold, heavy and light, large and small, are as relative as right and wrong. These qualities are all discerned by, and exist for, this human consciousness to which they are manifest. All knowledge rests ultimately on faith; faith in the trustworthiness of this consciousness, and of the unknown source whence it

comes, and by which it is sustained. Professor Huxley says: "The one act of faith in the convert to science, is the confession of the universality of order, and of the absolute validity, in all times and under all circumstances, of the law of causation."¹ The conceptions of this universal order and of the law of causation are the product of the experience of phenomena which is given in our consciousness; and if human consciousness, fallible though it is, is untrustworthy, then science is impossible. It is not one act of faith which suffices for science, but a perpetual state of faith is required. All knowledge, whether physical or spiritual, ultimately rests on faith, and the physical not less than the spiritual.

And in fact, the revelations given to man, relative and partial though they be, do effectively command human credence. The great moral distinctions of right and wrong, with all the vast train of consequences flowing therefrom, are as certain, and as surely believed, as the order of the physical world and the law of causation.

Is this all? Is "the secret light which shines in the heart and reprove unrighteousness" the sum total of the self-evident truth of religion? If the discrimination between right and wrong is all that is given in consciousness, why speak of this as religious truth? Why not call it simply "moral," using a term which implies no reference to the Deity? Barclay calls this Light, "the small beginning of the revelation of God's Spirit;" an attribution not self-evident. The Light is self-evident; but not its cause; it is kindled by an invisible hand, it is supported by an unseen supply. Yet we cannot doubt, we ought not to doubt, that our moral faculty with

¹ *Life of Charles Darwin*, by Francis Darwin, Vol. II. p. 250.

all its revelations, proceeds from that unknown Power whence the whole universe proceeds. Conscience is part of the universal order; has been evolved, or introduced by the all-embracing law of causation. Who or what is that unknown Power? We name it God; but a name confers no knowledge. The Infinite, the Absolute, the Eternal, that which is independent of all phenomena, and the cause of all phenomena, is necessarily inconceivable by finite beings. Yet our nescience is not absolute: the Infinite exists; so much we know; nor is the knowledge slight and unimportant; but outweighs in grandeur and momentousness all science besides. But if our knowledge of God is confined to His bare existence, it is practically equivalent to absolute ignorance, and we are left to the chilly darkness of agnosticism. The very name of God, with all its hallowed associations should be dropped. Much should we lose; we should feel orphans and comfortless. Still there are compensations. We should lose the comfort, but gain relief from the terror. Whether loss or gain, we cannot choose; we must follow the truth whithersoever it leads, be it into the darkness of despair. Yet before we make the greatest renunciation of all, let us be clear as to its necessity.

In George Fox's time there were atheists: the peculiar phase of thought called agnosticism, if it existed, had not yet defined itself, found a name, and presented itself as a philosophy. Once at least, George Fox was tempted by atheistic suggestions. "And one morning as I was sitting by the fire, a great cloud came over me, and a temptation beset me; and I sat still. And it was said, 'all things come by nature;' and the elements and stars came over me, so that I was in a manner quite

clouded with it; but inasmuch as I sat still and said nothing the people of the house perceived nothing. And as I sat still under it and let it alone, a living hope arose in me, and a true voice arose in me which said: 'There is a living God who made all things.' And immediately the cloud and temptation vanished away, and life rose over it all, and my heart was glad, and I praised the living God. And after some time I met with some people that had such a notion, that there was no God, but that all things came by nature. And I had great dispute with them, and overturned them, and made some of them confess that there was a living God: then I saw that it was good that I had gone through that exercise."¹ These two opposing voices—who has not heard them?—give us an insight into what Fox meant by "revelation." The process of his thought he does not express; indeed, he seems, at the time, to have been unconscious of it; but there was a logical process, for afterwards he was able to put it into an effective argument. A mind saturated by the Bible could not miss the sublime argument of the Psalmist:

"The heavens declare the glory of God,
And the firmament sheweth His handiwork,
Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night sheweth knowledge."

Nor would this other be less convincing:

"He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?
He that formed the eye, shall He not see?
He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not He correct?
He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not He know?"

¹ *Journal*, I. 93.

Probably the argument of these last two lines had more weight than all other with George Fox. That the Book said so, was not enough for him; but this he knew in his own experience. In those years of mental conflicts, God had chastised *him*, God had taught *him* knowledge. Now when a voice out of the darkness whispered to his soul, there is no God, all things come by nature, he was dumfounded for awhile; but when he recovered from the stupefaction, he knew it was a lie; he knew that was the true voice which said "There is a living God, who made all things." It was not possible for him to doubt that the Lord of his conscience was the Lord of the universe.

Is it so with us? In these days many who acknowledge the moral sense are in doubt about its author. They do not dispute the validity of conscience; nor that the sense of moral obligation is not simply subjective, but bears within itself the stamp of external authority. Nevertheless, reaction against anthropomorphic conceptions of the Deity, and the pressure of difficulties in the nature of things, such as the existence of misery and of wickedness, hinder them from heartily believing in God. Unwilling to deny His existence, unable to believe in Him, they confess themselves agnostics.

Is this hesitation of mind, this inability to come to a decision, a weakness to be pitied, if not blamed; or a sound judgment to be adopted as the last word of philosophy? Of late it seems to have been put forward in the latter guise. Atheism is irrational; theism, it is said, lacks proof; to believe without evidence is wrong; therefore we must sit down contented with agnosticism, and shape our lives accordingly. But this

is just what it is not possible to do. Atheism, if it could be demonstrated, if it were heartily credible, would afford firm ground to tread upon. We should then know that we ought to eliminate from our minds all influences and motives proceeding from the conception of a Deity, and frame our conduct solely in accordance with human motives and material laws. But agnosticism gives not this freedom, for agnosticism is ignorance, nothing better. It dares not say, there is no God; it rather inclines to admit that God is, if only it be allowed that He is altogether unknown. How can ignorance be a starting-point, or an ultimate resting-place for a system of thought? How can ignorance form a solid basis for action? Agnosticism in its nature is indecision; hence akin to irresolution and inaction. Instead of being something to boast of and champion in controversy, it really condemns its unhappy victim to a pitiable condition of perpetual suspense.

Moreover agnosticism is not pure ignorance. Pure ignorance is that in which there is no idea of the object in the mind. Pure ignorance excludes doubt. The lower animals are in this state as regards the Deity; and for aught we know, among the innumerable worlds, there may be races of intelligent beings in other respects not inferior to man, in whose minds there has never risen the inquiry whether the universe has a Creator, whether behind the current of fleeting phenomena, there is an Eternal Cause. But our case is not like theirs. The universe so acts upon us that it suggests the inquiry as to its origin, as to the source of its order, the cause of its phenomena, the authority whence emanates the moral law. The inquiry is forced upon us by the constitution

of our nature, the answer too is suggested, and we are powerfully impelled to accept it; but there are difficulties. The answer is not so plain, but that misgivings may arise, doubts may creep in. Agnosticism avers that doubt and indecision are in the nature of the case inevitable and final. Miserable is our lot, if this be the truth; but if it be so, it is bootless to strive against the truth. Nevertheless before we acquiesce in this melancholy conclusion, let us consider the situation once again.

We stand here conscious of an inward Light, which reveals the path of duty; we are compelled to attribute that Light to an unknown cause, not to ourselves; for we know too well that we are and have been too often opposed to the Light, and of ourselves prone to go in quite the opposite direction. What is it then? Shall we linger for ever in imbecile inactivity, because intellectual difficulties are insoluble? Nay, let us up and follow the Light, and see whither it will lead. See now whether this Light will not lead you, though you cannot *know* God, to *trust* in Him? The fallacy of agnosticism is this: it confounds ignorance of the nature of God, with ignorance of His relation to us and our relation to Him. The Eternal Cause is inaccessible, but the effect is accessible, and the Cause is known as Cause of the effect. God is incomprehensible, but His will concerning man is not incomprehensible. This the inward Light, the law written on the heart, reveals with unmistakeable clearness. And by this Light we do, in a certain sense, see God, and know God. The knowledge of God is not a definite, demonstrable knowledge, like the knowledge of mathematics or the physical sciences; it is akin to that knowledge of the universal order and law, which has

been described as an act of faith. "This confession (of the universality of order, and of the absolute validity of the law of causation) is an act of faith, because by the nature of the case, the truth of such propositions is not susceptible of proof. But such faith is not blind, but reasonable: because it is invariably confirmed by experience and constitutes the sole trustworthy foundation for all action."¹ Just so is the fundamental faith of religion justified. It is invariably confirmed by experience. Innumerable are the errors into which man's shortsightedness, rashness, and self-conceit cause him to fall, both in the pursuit of physical science and of religious truth. Through tentative experiments, often undertaken under misconceptions, and with the expectation, even the desire, of results which do not occur, physical science fights its way onward to the larger truth; so in the quest of moral perfection, many a blunder, many a failure is incurred; but again and again we find by experience that God teaches us through our very mistakes and even our sins. The progress of knowledge is the proof that the scientific faith is true; the growth of the moral character toward perfection is the proof that the religious faith is true.

To this the agnostic may reply, "I too, own the validity of the moral law, and do honestly strive to shape my life accordingly." Nor can any reasonable fair-minded man doubt the sincerity of this confession, and its practical fruitfulness. But we may fairly ask him the question: Is your agnosticism a help or a hindrance to you in your striving after moral perfections? Nay more, although you do stoutly resist

¹ Professor Huxley; in *Life of Darwin*. Vol. II, page 200.

temptations, and manfully adhere to that standard of morality to which you have attained, are you not conscious that with the loss of your faith in God, there is a danger of that standard becoming insensibly lowered; aye, and that even you, under the strain of extraordinary temptation, might look around for the support which religious faith affords, and missing its sustaining power, might succumb? These are questions which the agnostic must answer, not the believer for him. To the theist, the position of the agnostic is not easily intelligible. The moral qualities of conduct and of character being true distinctions, they affect, when apprehended, the Christian and the agnostic similarly. Believer and unbeliever alike can see the beauty of virtue, alike loathe the hideousness of vice; nor can we doubt that some agnostics are better men than many professors of religion. But what the believer cannot understand is the agnostic's failure to perceive that the moral law is a revelation of God. The agnostic seems to sever morality from the unity of all things, not to allow that it proceeds from the Infinite and Eternal Cause of the universe, whence all else proceeds. Apparently to him, morality is an acquired instinct which grows up in an artificial society, without root in the true nature of things. One supposes the agnostic meditating thus: the Infinite produces the tiger and the cobra, as well as the lamb and the dove, finds room for Nero and Messalina as well as for Saint Louis and Saint Catharine; and I have no reason to suppose that to the Infinite the one kind is more cognate, more acceptable than the other. If this be his thought, morality must appear to him an acquired taste which he can hardly make a rule for all

men in all circumstances. The moral law cannot possess for him the highest possible validity, cannot be of equal rank with the universal order and law of causation. But, as was said, the agnostic's position is not easily intelligible by the believer. It is better to leave him to speak for himself.

For himself, the believer can say that his faith in God is the impulse which sustains and urges him on in his endeavour after the perfect life; that he cannot conceive how without this faith the perfect life can exist. To him faith in God is the substratum of all the virtues. It is equally inconceivable how the true spiritual life can begin, and how it can be perfected without this faith. For the first revelation of the inward Light is sin; and if sin is unpardonable, ineradicable, then are we left to despair. But with the revelation of our sin comes also the grace of contrition, the impulse to abhor and reject the sin, and the hope of Divine forgiveness and help. Thus trust in God is the initial step in the way to moral perfection; and its culmination is that sublime climax of faith when the individual can render up himself, body, soul and spirit: all he is and all he has, in the midst of sharpest suffering, and into the darkness of death, in perfect trust that God reigns over all, and all is well.

God, duty, faith, these are the fundamental verities of self-evident religion. They are not obtained, as mathematical axioms are, by simple mental abstraction; nor do they, by bare enunciation, command universal assent. They require to be felt, in order to be known: they become self-evident in a living process. Duty reveals God: the sense of sin burns this conviction into the soul. By

penitence and prayer, new relations of pardon and peace, faith and hope, are entered into. The process is not the work of a day, but a life-long experience; and that Light which at first was dimly and fitfully visible, brightens more and more, until it illumines the whole atmosphere of our being, and we know God, not only as the Author of the moral law, but as our Saviour from sin and condemnation.

CHAPTER XX.

ON THE SELF-EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

CHRISTIANITY as set forth in catechisms, creeds, sermons, and systems of theology, comprises much that is not self-evident. The nature of the Deity, the origin of the universe, angelic and diabolic spirits, miraculous events, judgment to come, heaven and hell, are not immediately revealed to each individual believer, do not come within the sphere of his present spiritual experience. If we discard all other teaching, and go back to the New Testament, its pages contain historical and doctrinal matter relating to these topics. Christianity, as a whole, is not self-evident.

Some portion of Christianity is self-evident. All the self-evident moral and religious truth, referred to in the preceding chapter, is contained in Christianity. To distinguish between self-evident Christianity, and that portion of the Christian Faith which rests upon the authority of history, tradition, the Church, and the Scriptures, is a task which was not undertaken by the Quakers, nor has it been, to my knowledge, formally and successfully undertaken by any one; although the internal evidence of Christianity has been from the first its most convincing argument. A tacit assumption is frequently made that both the Bible and Christianity are organic vital unities, the parts of which are inseparable. If this

be so, then the self-evidencing quality which belongs to a part, avails to prove the truth of the whole. The argument is sound, but the suppressed premiss is too important and far-reaching to be lightly assented to. It requires its own proof, and the first step in attempting to furnish it would be accurate demarcation and definition. Let us know what is self-evidencing Christianity, and what Christian truth lies outside the verification of the inward Light.

In these days there are not a few whose hearts are set on truth and righteousness, who practically acknowledge and follow the Light within, but who cannot, or think they cannot, abide in that Christian faith in which they were educated. Nevertheless they hold fast to what they conceive to be the spirit of Christianity, and strive to carry it into practice. Now, if such an one were to describe what is left to him, after parting with historical Christianity, if he were to analyse his own religious experience and tell us what he sees, what he knows, in this region: it would be of great interest. Possibly the attempt might lead him to perceive that this inner experience of his own, is a confirmation of the essential truth of Christianity, and that therefore his renunciation of it was a mistake. As far as I am aware, nothing of the kind has hitherto been published. Accounts we have of the mental processes which led to the rejection of Christianity; but these descriptions are not contributions to the knowledge of self-evident religion. They give us the impression of mariners afloat on a broken piece of wreck, or of people whose homes have been destroyed by earthquake constructing a temporary shelter amid the ruins; rather than of peaceful husband-

men watching the growth of the seeds they have planted. We have still to wait for the philosophical exhibition of pure spiritual religion abstracted from its historical embodiment.

The Children of the Light did not attempt to work out this problem because they were born into a historical religion, the heritage of the ages, which, according to their belief, fully satisfied every demand of the inner light, so that to them the one was the evidence of the truth of the other. They believed in the Christ of the Bible because He seemed to them the truth to which the Light within them testified, the ideal to which it pointed, the external manifestation in history of the divine life which was working in them the salvation of their souls. They did not try to develop internal religion independently of Christianity, because Christianity and their own religious experience appeared to them identical. In a preceding chapter, it was pointed out that Barclay's *Apology* failed to convince his own generation, because, on the one hand, he did not unfold the contents of immediate revelation; and on the other, he practically accepted the Protestant doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture. Barclay was apparently quite unconscious of the defects of his argument. His *Apology* was not addressed to sceptics, but to the churches of Christendom. He and they held common ground in their uncritical acceptance of the Bible. Neither side felt the slightest difficulty in believing the miraculous. To both their unquestioning faith in the supernatural inspiration of Scripture was a guarantee of the truth of all its contents. If some of the quakers besides Bromfield called in question portions of the sacred story, Barclay

was not one of them. For him the whole Bible was verified by the witness of the Spirit. "As we believe," he says, "all those things to have been certainly transacted, which are recorded in the Holy Scriptures, concerning the *Birth, Life, Miracles, Sufferings, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ*; so we do also believe that it is the duty of every one to believe it, to whom it pleases God to reveal the same, and to bring them to the knowledge of it; yea, we believe it were *Damnable Unbelief* not to believe it, when so declared; but to resist that Holy Seed which, as minded, would lead and incline every one to believe it, as it is offered unto them; though it revealeth not in every one the outward and explicit Knowledge of it, nevertheless it always assenteth to it, *ubi declaratur*, where it is declared."¹ Not unfrequently the early Friends presented their own spiritual experience as a repetition, a new fulfilment, of the great transactions of Scripture. In them the Fall took place; Christ was crucified in them, by their sins; in their repentance and regeneration, Christ was born, Christ rose from the dead. But far from intending this mystical fulfilment to throw doubt upon the historic reality of the Bible events, they found in their personal experience an indubitable confirmation of the history. Edward Burroughs held that it made him independent of all other testimony. "We witness," he declared, "the same Christ made manifest in us, and His resurrection, not because Paul said so, but we have seen it, and are witnesses of it . . . it is not taking their words, nor thy own imaginations that is faith, nor if thou know Christ no nearer than Jerusalem, nor no

¹ *Apology*, p. 141.

nearer than above the stars, that is not to know Christ risen from the dead.”¹

This rejection of the historical and sole reliance upon the spiritual evidence, was perhaps a flight of rhetoric. The spiritual presence and power of Christ in the hearts of His disciples is a sufficient proof to the believer of His spiritual resurrection; but for the historic event as narrated in the gospels, historic evidence is required. The spiritual evidence strongly predisposes to the reception of the historic, but cannot altogether dispense with it.

However, the quakers did not live in our time. To them, and to other religious people of their age, the historic evidence seemed ample. There is no need to apologise for the adherence of the Quakers to the Christianity of the New Testament. They found that it perfectly satisfied their moral sense, that it shone with diviner radiance, as their own spiritual capacity grew. They did not spend their strength in a critical examination of its historic evidence, because in their view a merely historical faith was worthless. In this the Quakers consistently maintained their fundamental principle. It is one thing to hold a traditional creed, under the influence of authority, or convinced by external proofs: quite another to see truth for oneself and thus to possess the certainty that it is the truth. Of the nature and reality of this spiritual vision every one who possesses a moral sense is aware, because he sees or feels something of the kind in himself. Every one, too, who has applied this moral sense to the successive experiences of life, knows that while the faculty of

¹ *Answers to Philip Barret and John Reece*, 1654.

testing truth exists in himself, the knowledge of truth is more frequently communicated to him from without than independently attained by his own personal meditations and prayers. The process by which the Quakers tested the truth of Christianity is therefore recognizably valid, though it properly applies only to the spiritual essence of Christianity, and not directly to its historical form. From the rudimentary perception of the distinction between right and wrong, and the feeling which this brings of an unknown power to whom we are responsible, to the joyful confidence in Jesus Christ as the ideal of humanity, the revealer of the Father, the Saviour of the world, the progress is immense, and viewed from outside may seem impossible. But to these Quakers it seemed that they were led every step of the way by the same light, and that they saw the whole ever widening circle of truth, by the same faculty of spiritual vision. There is no way of verifying or disproving this but by following the same path. The road is open to all.

The Invisible Father of Spirits speaks to the inner soul of man, saying: "Can you trust Me? will you trust Me? This light shining within which reveals you to yourself and condemns the evil within you is not to destroy, but to save. It points the way, will you trust and follow?" Happy he who can reply: I can, God helping me, and I will. I cannot know Him, but I can trust: and trusting in Him I will avail myself of all the teaching and the help for my spiritual life which He in the progress of the ages has given to my forefathers, and into which, a rich inheritance, He bids me enter. To one who by birth and education is a Christian, there

is no teacher, no example, no impulse to the divine life comparable to Jesus Christ. His voice he hears saying, "I am the Light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness but shall have the light of life." It is not in the words of the fourth gospel only, that he hears the voice. He hears it in his own inner being, where each holy precept, each loving word, each several feature in the moral perfection of that character, and the impression of the whole summed up in His great self-sacrifice, and reproduced in a measure in those who live by Him, re-echoes this voice, ever repeating its loving invitation: "Come unto Me;" "Follow Me." And now, as he obeys this voice, behold, just in proportion to his faithful obedience, he is delivered from the dominion of evil, he attains to inward purity and peace, he passes "from death unto life," and knows himself "a new creature." Feeble at first his trust, and conscious of painful effort; but accumulated experience invariably verifying it, it becomes habitual, strong, and sure. The Light shines so steadily and clear, that the Child of the Light marvels how he can ever have doubted, how any can fail to see and believe. He is, and knows that he is, a fallible man, not incapable of errors and prejudices: and if he is a wise man he acknowledges the possible, even the probable, existence of an element of error in his theological system, supposing him to have one. But to him Christianity is not a creed only, but his spiritual life: the life of Christ quickening him into the Christ-like life. Whatever else is doubtful, this he knows to be true. He will never consent to deliver his Christian faith into the hands of the historian, the antiquarian, the archaeologist. Let these work at their tasks in the true

scientific spirit, and disinter from the long buried past, so much of historic certainty as they can. The living Christian knows that his Christianity is not a matter of ancient history, but a present spiritual life; and he possesses an experience which historical research cannot take away.

Even the positivist and the agnostic can perceive the reality of this Christian experience. "Ardent love, gratitude, and veneration for Christ," says a distinguished positivist, "*when* kindled, *are* able to snap the chains of habit, and sometimes to prevent their being welded together again. But it is rash, not to say reckless, to trust to a random cyclone of the nobler passions to save us from our sins."¹ This acknowledgment is the more remarkable, because the writer is strongly disposed to attribute all differences of moral character to heredity, education, and circumstances. "A man with a criminal nature and education, under given circumstances of temptation, can no more help committing crime than he could help having a headache under certain conditions of brain and stomach."² Again, "nothing is gained by disguising the fact that there is no remedy for a bad heart, and no substitute for a good one."³ What is this, but an arbitrary contradiction of the experience already acknowledged to be true? Heredity, education, circumstance, these elements in the production of character are admitted by all, but the Christian testifies to a new force, the influence of the teaching and the spirit of Christ, by which he is consciously impelled. This is not to be dis-

¹ *The Service of Man*, by James Cotter Morison, 1887, p. 286.

² *Ibid.*, p. 289.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

posed of by assuring the saints that, like the poets, they were born, not made; and the sinners that they cannot help being so. The "saints" who know how they struggled, wept, and prayed against an evil heart of unbelief, an inward proclivity to moral offences from which their outward conduct has been free, unanimously deny that they are of different race and quality from other men. The "sinners" who, without attaining to the fame of saintliness, wage a life-long conflict against moral evil, will indignantly protest against their deep conscientious conviction, their constant, though imperfect, endeavour to carry that conviction into practice, being described as "a random cyclone of the nobler passions." No. The reign of order and law is universal. Does the student of science need to be reminded of that?

Professor Huxley acknowledges, as heartily as one can expect from an outsider, the reality of the Christian experience. "I am much disposed to think that the encouragement, the consolation, and the peace afforded to earnest believers in even the worst forms of Christianity are of great practical advantage to them."¹ "If a man can find a friend, the hypostasis of all his hopes, the mirror of his ethical ideal, in the Jesus of any, or all of the gospels, let him live by faith in that ideal. Who shall or can forbid him? But let him not delude himself with the notion that his faith is evidence of the objective reality of that in which he trusts. Such evidence is to be obtained only by the use of the methods of science, as applied to history and to literature, and it amounts at present to very little."² There is an ambiguity here.

¹ *Nineteenth Century*, February, 1889, p. 184.

² *Ibid.*, p. 186.

In an important sense, there is no possibility of doubting the objective reality of that in which the Christian trusts. The Christian holds his Bible in his hand, the Book is a sensible objective reality. The Roman Catholic enters the Church, kneels at the altar, lifts up his eyes to the crucifix. The Church is an objective reality. The believer is quite certain that he did not write the Bible, he did not found the Church. From the Bible and the Church he derives his knowledge of the historical Jesus Christ. Now the position of the ordinary believer is this: he is not competent for the task of the scientific historian; are there in the judgment of Professor Huxley, a hundred persons in the world, who are competent? More or fewer, they are a small class of experts, who in the long run, will, as far as scientific knowledge goes, carry the world after them. But the millions of believers accept the teaching of the Bible and the Church, and through this they come into contact with the Jesus, who wins their affections and rules their lives. Professor Huxley holds that the objective reality in which they place their trust is not historically clear and sure. The Church and the Bible may both be mistaken as to what Jesus Christ actually was and is. The credulous veneration of his disciples and their successors may have added features to his character, incidents to his life, which did not belong to him. The intelligent believer cannot deny the possibility of this. Considering the varying and partly conflicting phases of thought in the churches, it is manifest that they are not infallible. Considering the fallibility of human nature, an infallible Book can only be believed upon evidence of miraculous interposition. But the Christian will not therefore allow

that his faith must necessarily stand or fall by the judgment of a hundred, or a thousand, experts in historical lore. "If it is not historically true," says Professor Huxley, "that such and such things happened in Palestine eighteen centuries ago, what becomes of Christianity? And what is historical truth, but that of which the evidence bears strict scientific investigation? The Christianity of the churches stands or falls by the result of the purely scientific investigation of these questions."¹ Here again is an ambiguity, or possibly an intentional qualification. "The Christianity of the churches:" does the phrase hint that there is another Christianity than any which the churches have conceived? The progress of Biblical criticism and historical investigation, have modified, and may yet modify the dogmatic theology of some at least of the churches, but must Christianity itself stand or fall by the result of purely scientific investigation? The answer is simple and complete. Christianity has stood for eighteen hundred years, and stands to-day, independently of purely scientific investigation. Confessedly the scientific study of history is not a century old. Christianity was built up before the science of history was thought of: its foundation is not exact knowledge, but spiritual truth spiritually discerned. One lived and died near two thousand years ago, who was able to awaken the conscience, and inspire the heart of man with noble thoughts and right impulses, as never did man before, as never another since; this man implanted an ideal of a new life in the minds of his followers which lived and propagated itself. Faith in Him completed the Bible, produced the

¹ *Nineteenth Century*. April, 1889, p. 485.

Church; and to this day faith in Him, produced by the Bible and the Church, can arrest men in their downward career, aid their struggling steps as they strive to tread the narrow way, give them peace with God and victory over sin, raise them to the highest moral ideal of which the human mind has any conception. We can afford to leave purely scientific investigation to do its own work. The believer knows that his faith cannot be overthrown by the result, because it rests not upon history alone, but upon truth immediately known in personal experience.

Let it be frankly admitted that we do not possess historic certainty for every detail of the Saviour's biography. Some portions of the gospel story may be legendary: however shocking this may be to pious feeling, let us honestly confess that we have not strict scientific evidence for every incident of the narratives. Let it be granted that we cannot prove the miracles, that when they are believed, they are believed, not on account of an irresistible weight of testimony, but because they are associated with truths which are believed on the ground of internal evidence and Christian experience. The progress of scientific investigation has had some effect upon us already, and its further advance may have more. But the Christian may reply to the agnostic after this manner: what you and I call Christianity is a very complex matter; it is near two thousand years old; it has a sure historic foundation, as sure as anything in history, viz., that Jesus lived and taught in Galilee, and died upon the Cross, and was believed by His disciples to have risen from the dead; that teaching, and life, and death, and the belief in that resurrection,

produced the Christian life, which is the essence and spiritual power of Christianity. And so Christianity took root and grew; and human intellects have exercised themselves upon it not always to its improvement; and human hearts have clung to it, bringing sometimes their own superstitions to mingle with its purity; and thus through the centuries rituals and creeds and systems of theology have built upon the original foundation, superstructures partly of gold and silver and precious stones; partly of wood and hay and stubble. Now you ask me, is Christianity true? I reply: that depends upon what you mean by Christianity. The Christianity of the churches of the present day is certainly not altogether true, for the churches differ and even contradict each other on some points; and there must be error on one side or the other. I have no guarantee that the primitive church was absolutely perfect, and I am unable to prove that the records which it has bequeathed to us were miraculously preserved from error. For my part I test the truth of Christianity by the inward Light, and in practical experience. Christianity professes to be a revelation from God, to save me from my sins, and bring me into the true life. I find in experience that it is a revelation from God, it does save me from my sins, it does bring me into the true life. When I say that I am sure that Christianity is true, I make a statement which cannot be affected by scientific investigation of history, because I mean that spiritual essence and energy of the Christian faith, which I know in my own personal experience. To me the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines from the face of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CHURCH, THE BIBLE, AND THE SPIRIT.

THE story of the Children of the Light begins with an affirmation and ends with a query. In the great church at Nottingham, George Fox challenged the Protestant creed by his assertion that it is not the Scriptures, but the Holy Spirit, whereby opinions, religions, and judgments were to be tried. We have seen that his doctrine of the inward Light is not a delusion; that it is based upon moral and spiritual intuitions, which are fundamental truths of human nature; but the relation of the inward Light to the Church, and to the Scriptures has yet to be considered. Is it true, as Fox declared, that this inward Light is the ultimate and supreme authority in religious truth?

Fox maintained that his doctrine was a revival of primitive Christianity. The first generation of Christians had no Christian Scriptures. Our Lord Jesus Christ left no written document as His last will and testament. In the fourth gospel we are told that just before His death He promised the coming of another Helper, whose presence should more than compensate for His absence, whose presence should in some sense be His presence, even the Spirit of Truth who should guide the disciples into all truth. The promise was fulfilled. The Spirit of Christ was the supreme authority and

impelling force in the first Christian Church. The decree of the earliest council ran thus: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us!" Every believer was taught to regard himself as having the Spirit dwelling in him; and was bidden to judge the spirits whether they were of God. Paul called the Corinthian Church an epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit. In those days believers lived and walked by the Spirit. George Fox claimed that in himself and his followers, this primeval gospel of the Spirit, after it had been long lost in the darkness of the apostacy, was restored in its pristine purity.

Yet, even then, Christians were not so guided by the Spirit as to be independent of the Church. The whole Church, guided by the same Spirit, had power to bind, to loose, to excommunicate. Apostles and prophets were the teachers and rulers of the congregation, were in a true sense foundations upon which the living edifice was built. If the doctrine of the inward Light means the rejection of all external authority, and reliance upon subjective perceptions alone, it is inconsistent both with the New Testament history, and with all subsequent experience. The child kneeling at his mother's knee, and learning to say, "Our Father," is capable of religious feeling, may have a conscious feeling of awe and of trust in an invisible Presence; but this internal witness of the Spirit does not dispense with the external instruction. What is true of the child, is true for all. The Spirit of God does not isolate the believer, and bestow upon him separate enlightenment, independently of his natural place in the order of existence. The Spirit works through the Church, and through the Bible, so that it is

impossible, except perhaps in a few rare cases, to determine that we owe the first perception of any truth to the inward Light alone. Practically, the immediate teaching of the Spirit, in the case of the majority of us, leads not to the fresh discovery of truth, but to the verification of truth presented to the mind by external authorities. Doubtless there once were original revelations of truth: nor need we deny the possibility of original revelations now. But we expect no new revelations, except such as shall come through a fuller understanding, and more faithful following of the old. For us the function of the Spirit is to test, to discriminate, to assimilate or reject, the influences which enter the soul from the teaching of the churches, the various interpretations of Scripture, and in other ways. The Spirit enables us to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good. In this sense the assertion of George Fox that the Spirit is the ultimate authority is intelligible. But is it true?

If it is true, the churches have shown a manifest reluctance to accept this truth. One might have thought that the proffer to each of us of a Divine guide, an internal illumination, a direct vision of spiritual realities, enabling us to see and to know with clear certainty those things which belong to our spiritual life, would be welcomed with thankful acceptance; that every one would bestir himself at once to make trial of this inward Light. The history of eighteen centuries shows that mankind would trust in anything rather than in this manifestation of Christ within the heart. Be it prophet, or Scripture, or Church, or Science, men have always looked, and do still look, for the foundation of their

faith outside themselves. Very early the teaching of the Spirit was subordinated to the authority of the Church. The Christian faith came to be regarded as a deposit from the past, handed down to successive generations, which could no longer verify it, as at first, by the immediate revelations of the indwelling Spirit. For fifteen hundred years ecclesiastical authority was the ultimate foundation, beyond which inquiry could not go. When the corruptions of the Church compelled the Christian conscience to break away from its domination, there was no frank return to the primitive faith in the presence of Christ by His Spirit in the hearts of believers. The Bible was exalted to the position of supreme authority; became the external "revelation;" before which human reason, though enlightened by the Spirit's teaching, must submit without question. The assertion that God Himself is our teacher was greeted with cries of derision, shouts of "blasphemy." Two hundred years have passed away since then, and with them, first a vain attempt to found religion upon mere human reason; then a great revival of living piety based upon the Protestant doctrine of the infallible Book; when this waned, and doubts and difficulties multiplied, a great reaction towards the ancient belief in the authority of the Church succeeded. It cannot be said that Christians have erred by too eager confidence in the inward Light. Mistrust of our own logical powers, of the range of our mental vision, of our personal inclinations, desires and fears,—that is reasonable enough: but when it is a question, not of self-confidence, but of confidence in the Divine Spirit, it is possible to err on the side of unbelief, as well as on that of presumption. A survey of the state of Christendom

at the present time suggests a serious inquiry whether in the rejection of the doctrine of the inward Light, the Church did not lose its way.

Suppose that it were granted that an external authority is preferable to an internal guide, that men and women being poor fallible creatures, if taught to depend upon impressions made upon their own minds by the Holy Spirit, will fall into the error of mistaking their own vain imaginations for these impressions; the question arises, is there such an authority? Has God given an external revelation, known to be such, apart from the inward illumination of His Spirit in the heart?

The authority of the Church: what is its nature, its source, its extent? By the Church let us understand neither the Roman, the Greek, the Anglican, nor any other; but the Church of Christ which consists of all true Christians, the life and activity of which is partly manifested, partly hindered and obscured, by these several organizations. This true Church, this living temple of the Spirit of Christ, possesses and exercises a rightful authority, not extrinsically conferred, but inherent in its very nature. "We speak that we do know, and bear witness of that we have seen," is the testimony of the Church as it was of its Founder. This testimony convicts of sin, calls to repentance, awakens faith, begets spiritual life, directs to that inward witness of the Spirit which confirms its teaching. The source of this authority is the living presence of the Divine Spirit. Its extent is commensurate with the answer of the same Spirit, speaking in the heart of the individual believer. The voice of the Church speaks to the witness of the Spirit within, and when the Spirit within attests the message, the

Church's teaching comes with divine authority. Whensoever a Church overpassing this limit, constructs a dogmatic system, and enacts a law, "Thus shalt thou believe," it no longer appeals to its legitimate authority; and the appeal though frequently made and submitted to, is a result of confusion of thought. Whether the several propositions of the creed are argued one by one, with reasons and evidences adduced for each separately; or whether an attempt is made to support a claim to infallibility which shall establish the whole system at once; in either case, by the resort to logical proofs, the claim to authority is virtually surrendered. In the moral and spiritual life, authority is inherent, not dependent upon external demonstration. Furthermore, if it were worth while to examine the argument by which it is sought to prove the claim of the Roman Church to infallibility, it would be seen that the inward Light is an indispensable link in the chain. Other links are defective, but if they were all sound, they depend upon this. Remove this, and the whole argument falls to pieces. When closely scrutinized this dogma of the Church's infallibility is seen to be an illegitimate extension of an authority properly belonging only to self-evident truth, an extension which attempts to cover other regions of thought, where the human mind should rest content with something short of absolute certainty.

The Holy Scriptures possess divine authority, and are in a true sense, the foundation of the spiritual life of churches, and of individuals. Men can and do build their lives upon this Book. In its pages are stored up treasures of truth of price inestimable, revelations given of old to patriarchs and prophets, evangelists and apostles.

The honest truth-seeker from whose eyes the veils of self-conceit and prejudice have been removed, reading the sacred Volume, does see here truths of God and of man, and of man's relation to God, which shine in their own self-evident light, and guide him to a life of trust and obedience, of purity and peace, in which he knows that he is in the truth, and has fellowship with God. This self-luminousness of the truths of the spiritual life, diffused throughout the volume in various degrees, conspicuously concentrated, as in a glorious central Sun, in Jesus Christ, is that testimony of the Spirit, upon which Calvin and the Reformers rightly relied as the sufficient and only proof of the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures. Those who see this light shining therein, will not be overwhelmed by a thousand doubts, difficulties and objections. These are but passing clouds, earth-born mists, arising from our misconceptions. They may obscure the Heavenly Light for awhile, but they pass by, and the Light is seen again, in its divine purity and glory. The Christian safely trusts his Bible, so long as he uses it in his own spiritual life, and verifies its truth in practice. This is its own claim, that it can "make wise unto salvation;" this is its purposes, "that the man of God may be perfect."

The Reformers went beyond this. They attributed a miraculous character to the text of the Bible. Its author was the Holy Ghost; its words, the utterances of God, to be esteemed far above human reason, far above the teaching of the Spirit in the believer. If conflict arose between reason and the Spirit on the one hand, and the express statements of Scripture on the other, there was no question as to which must yield. "Thus saith the

Lord," must put an end to all doubts. If this conception of the authority of the Bible is true, it is not a self-evident truth, but one which must be established by arguments and evidences. Is it so established? The study of the Christian evidences affords occupation for a life-time, and the great majority of believers have neither time nor capacity to undertake the investigation. But all believers, both the unlearned and the learned, know that their faith in Holy Scripture does not rest upon these external evidences. The inward Light is the true source of the authority of Scripture; and all attempts to prove an authority of the written Word higher than that of its source, are predestined to failure. In fact, the Bible, as is evident enough to the reader whose mind is disencumbered of inherited prejudices, does not put forth any claim to an infallibility such as the Puritans believed it to possess; and more than that, the absence of this alleged infallibility is plainly visible to open eyes.

The wonder is, that the Protestants, having persuaded themselves that they fully believed that the texts of Scripture were the very words of God, yet dared to handle them by human reason; to explain them, sometimes to explain them away; to separate propositions from their context, and recombine them in new connections; and finally, by this method, to deduce from the words of Scripture, systems of doctrine which differ, more or less, from the express statements of Scripture itself. The scrupulosity of George Fox which refused to acknowledge theological terms and phrases, such as "the Trinity," which are not found in the Bible, is more consistent with faith in the divine inspiration of Scrip-

ture, than the treatment of the Bible as an unfinished and ill-arranged production, requiring to be perfected for practical use by human industry and ingenuity. The theory of an infallible Book needs that of an infallible interpreter; for who else shall dare to interpret it? How strange to watch John Calvin, who firmly believed that the Scriptures came from Heaven, "as directly as if God had been heard giving utterance to them,"¹ and professed to subject his intellect and judgment to them as "too transcendent for him to estimate,"² yet writing his *Institutes* to show believers what they "ought principally to look for in Scripture," and giving them "a kind of key to a right and ready understanding of the sacred volume." This inconsistency between theory and practice is a sign that the theory of a miraculously dictated text does not accord with the facts. The labours of the Protestant divines in explaining the Bible are only not blameworthy, because the Bible is not the kind of book they would have it to be. It is, as the old Quakers taught, not the revelation itself, but a record of the revelation given to holy men of old. It can only become a revelation to its readers, as they are enabled to enter into its meaning by the enlightening influence of the Spirit of God.

The theological discussion, then, points to the conclusion that the inward Light is the ultimate and supreme authority, because its evidence is in itself, whereas the authority of the Church and that of the Bible depend upon it. When it is sought to stretch their authority beyond this limit, the demand arises; whence hast thou

¹ *Institutes*, Vol. I. Chap. vii. p. 89.

² *Ibid*, p. 96.

this authority? The answer must always at last be brought back to the test of the inward Light. No external proofs can avail to establish the Divine inspiration of the Church and of the Bible, without the testimony which is afforded by their harmony with the witness of the Spirit.

The history of the believers in the inward Light warns us that there is danger even here. We have seen that neither the infallibility of the Church nor of the Book can be sustained: but is not the Spirit infallible? is not the Spirit God? The example of the early Quakers indicates the serious consequences of trusting to logical reasoning in such matters. The Spirit is God; the Spirit of God works in men; but "the spirit" of the Quakers was, not the pure cause, but the effect of that cause working in the midst of human ignorance, prejudice, and conceit. The influence of the Spirit in the heart and mind of the believer produces as its result, perception of truth, conviction of duty, formation of character. In this result we see, not the Spirit of God alone, but the Spirit operating upon human finiteness, fallibility, infirmity. After a time, the Quakers fully realised that trust in the inward Light did not permit them to attribute infallibility to their own judgments. William Penn denies that the Quakers ever did assert themselves infallible; they only asserted "that all who are led by the infallible Light, and live according to its manifestations, are so far perfect and so far infallible in the right way, as they are led by it, and not a jot farther."¹ This however was not written until self-accusals had shown the liability of the Children of Light to be self-deceived,

¹ *Penn's Works*, Vol. V., p. 9.

and suppose themselves led by the Light when they were not. These examples remain on record to warn us of the necessity of deep personal humility, of readiness to recognise the illumination of the Spirit in others as well as ourselves, and of gratefully accepting the teaching accumulated for us in the Church and in the Bible, so far as this is corroborated by the Light within. "What was it from you that the word of God went forth? or came it unto you alone?"¹

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 36.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE history of quakerism is in some respects a miniature of the history of Christianity. The internal changes in the society of Friends imitate on a small scale the vaster changes of Christendom during eighteen centuries. Our study has brought us face to face with two classes of facts; the divisions, and the mutations, of the Christian religion. Christianity is not an indivisible, immutable unity. The Christian Church is split up into rival, even hostile sections; and these separate sections have undergone important alterations in the process of time. Some of these communities have declined in number and in power. In our own day we are painfully accustomed to hear the confident assertion that Christianity itself is dying, and will soon be dead, buried, and forgotten. It is an era of transition; the old is passing away; the new is not yet clearly discerned; hence men's hearts fail them for fear, and the love of many waxes cold. In such a time the story of the rise and decline of the Children of the Light may suggest an uneasy fear lest Christianity itself be after all only a larger quakerism, a wave of religious excitement of greater intensity and wider sweep, which has rolled across the continents and adown the ages for near two thousand years, which may take another thousand or

two to die away, but nevertheless is inevitably destined to wane and disappear at last. Is this the right deduction from our story ?

We cannot forecast the future of Christianity, until we have a clear notion of what Christianity is. When we set ourselves to examine attentively these conflicting currents of thought, these changing aspects of religious life, it begins to be apparent that the nature of true Christianity in itself, and the notion and expression of it in creed and church, are not by any means perfectly identical. Romanism and Protestantism, for instance, are irreconcilable foes; but there is a Christian spirit in the Catholic Church which leaps up to embrace the same spirit in the Protestant Church, defying all the anathemas of the clergy to keep them asunder. St. Anselm, St. Bernard, St. Francis are saints to the Protestant as well as to the Catholic. John Woolman clasps Thomas à Kempis to his heart. St. Elizabeth and Elizabeth Fry are sisters. The good Earl of Shaftesbury, stanchest of Protestants, opens his arms to Cardinal Manning and invites him to an alliance against the common foe.¹ In the story of quakerism, nothing surprised us more than the extreme repulsion between the first believers in the inward Light and their Puritan contemporaries. George Fox and John Bunyan clash and wrestle in their lifetime, but we from afar can discern that they were one in spirit, and we doubt not they love each other in heaven. It dawns upon us then that Christianity is not only and altogether, just what each or any one of these thought it to be, but

¹ Hoëder's *Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury*, Vol. III. p. 288.

something common to them all, something of which they were not fully conscious, or to which they did not attach so much importance as they did to the dogmas of their respective creeds. We begin to doubt our former superficial conclusion that Christianity is mutable and divisible. Is not Christianity a permanent and progressive unity just as humanity is? Differences of colour, race, and nationality, cannot destroy the common human nature of the Esquimaux and the Negro, the Caucasian and the Mongolian. Divided by localities, languages, and varying degrees of development, often arrayed against each other for mutual slaughter, in spite of all, mankind is one family; and we recognise these alienations and hostilities as unhappy perversions and mistakes, which delay the realisation of the true universal brotherhood. Is it not so in the Church of Christ? Christianity is a life; the true life of man; the life of the spirit reigning over all the lusts of the flesh; the life of the human spirit in perfect harmony with the Divine. Herein is the will of the Eternal, for man and in man, revealed and fulfilled. Christianity, we call it, because first in Jesus, the Christ, this life was manifested in its highest perfection, in a sinless glory never so much as imagined in connection with any other name. This life, incarnated in Him, propagated itself among the nations and along the ages; we see it around us; we feel it throbbing within us. This life is one and the same in all who know its power, and is inwardly felt to be such, despite all theological differences. Life, and human conceptions of what life is, are not identical. Chemistry and physiology have taught us much about the human body; albeit the mystery of its life is still in-

explicable as ever. But the human body lived just as it lives now, before Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood. Heart and lungs, veins and arteries, performed their functions in the days of Homer and of Moses, as perfectly as they do now. Our creeds and theologies are human conceptions of what the Christian life is; but the Christian life was before them all, is independent of them all, and probably no one of them is a perfectly true and adequate description of the reality. Their diversities, their mutations, prove that they are imperfect, not that the life itself is imperfect. Christianity is the life which Christ lived, which lives in us now by His Spirit.

An era of transition is a time of trial. We hear the champions of unbelief shouting their hurras over the downfall of ancient creeds: we see them pointing exultingly to the evident decay of faith in ecclesiastical authority and Biblical infallibility. Many a heart cries out in anguish, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" The terror and the exultation are alike a mistake. The foundations are indestructible: the sceptics do but overthrow artificial bulwarks, which add no strength, which only encumber and disfigure the real Christian verity. Men talk of Christianity dying out, but we who have seen that Christianity is the life of Christ in man, and who rejoice in a conscious participation in that life, know that they are uttering an absurdity. The life cannot die because it springs from the inexhaustible fountain of all life, the Eternal God. As to the varying degrees of its manifestation at particular times, we are not infallible judges: but there are grounds for the belief that never in any preceding genera-

tion was there so much Christianity in the world, nor Christianity of so good a quality as now. The controversies of the day belong to the intellectual region ; and the intellect is but a portion, and not the noblest portion, of human nature. The affections, the conscience, and the will, are more important factors of our being than the intellect ; and Christianity is firmly rooted in these. As a matter of fact, the great majority of Christians are little moved by the heat and noise and passion of the intellectual conflict. They believe and live, they love and obey ; Christianity is their salvation ; it saves them from vice and selfishness and fear ; it works in them purity and truth, peace and self-sacrifice ; they know this, and go on their way, careless of the philosophers. Christianity of this kind probably was never before so abundant, so active, so fearless. A recent writer who persuaded himself and tried to persuade us, that the Christian religion is evidently moribund, argued that its decease will not be so great a loss after all, because Christianity is unfavourable to morality ! And to support this view he devoted a chapter to prove that in "the ages of faith" European society was vastly more immoral than it is in our own day.¹ His facts may be granted, and a diametrically opposite conclusion drawn from them. Because the so-called "ages of faith" were morally dark ages, the inference might be securely drawn, if there were no other evidence for it, that their Christianity was either only nominal, or largely corrupt and distorted ; for Christianity is essentially morality illumined by the Light of Christ. The true deduction from the experience of

¹ *The Service of Man*. By James Cotter Morison, 1887. Chap. VI.

eighteen Christian centuries, is that the spirit, the life, of Christianity is indestructible. Romanism may decay, Protestantism may decay, Quakerism may decay, but the incorruptible seed, the Word of God, liveth and abideth for ever.

Although the future of Christianity is secure, its present condition is universally felt to be unsettled and unsatisfactory. Christianity is spirit and life: but it is spirit and life residing within a traditional body of doctrine and practice, or, more strictly speaking, within several traditional bodies of doctrine and practice, akin but not identical; from which it cannot be at will dissevered. These traditions are partly true, divinely prepared and ordained receptacles of the spiritual essence; partly artificial, mere drapery and decoration added by human hands, which do but encumber and disfigure the simple beauty of divine truth. But who shall determine for us, which is the true vital tradition, and which the spurious exercise? Timid Christians see the old beliefs of their fathers, the beliefs of their own childhood and youth, bit by bit crumbling away, until they are seized with an agony of alarm, lest all should disappear, first the Church, then the Bible, then the Christ, and last of all, God also: leaving them cold, helpless, and benighted, with nothing but a mere sentiment of morality and religion, deprived of all objects which can satisfy its cravings. Clearer heads and stouter hearts, which have refused to yield to panic, knowing that nothing can destroy the truth, have yet been much perplexed in the effort to determine what is the vital truth, and what can be safely and advantageously surrendered, not only without injury, but to the solid gain of spiritual Christianity. The infallibility

of the Church could be well spared, when we had the infallible Book to fall back upon. But now, after a whole generation of hesitation and misgiving, the truth about the Book is at last generally perceived and acknowledged. There is still a strong party which vehemently denies the truth, and obstinately persists in the old dogma. Three centuries have passed since the Reformation; and the dogma of the infallibility of the Church is to-day upheld by half Christendom. It will be nothing surprising if the dogma of the infallible Book commands a large body of adherents three generations or it may be three centuries hence. Nevertheless, the true Church, the vanguard of the host of the Lord, moves on, as its Leader guides. Romanism is left behind, despite its multitudes, its outward unity and apparent strength. Biblicalism is left behind; although it also commands a great host of sincere devotees, who live (as they think) by it, and would die for it. Those who have fairly emerged from these misconceptions, and set their faces stedfastly on the forward march, may be comparatively few, but they follow God's leading, and they know it. But whither? What shall now be their watchword? what shall now be the order of their march? the plan of their entrenchments? the chosen ground for their battlefield? They followed the truth in faith; they "went out, not knowing whither they went." They left the old untenable positions, in loyal obedience to the Divine call, but they do not at once enter upon settled and secure habitations. They wander as pilgrims who, though in the Promised Land, do not as yet inhabit a fortified Jerusalem, impregnable against a assault.

The dogma of the infallible Book having been sur-

rendered, the believer removed as little as possible from his old position. After all, he said to himself, verbal infallibility, plenary inspiration, are not indispensable. Not these, but the truths guaranteed by them, are what I need. The great facts of the gospel, these must be true. Christianity without Christ is impossible. This then is the new ground he selects for his entrenchments: external historic certainty. The Christian life holds him fast: he will not surrender that, under any stress of intellectual perplexity; because he knows in his inner consciousness that it is true. But the Christian life is rooted in Christ Jesus. Historically, this life began in Him: actually, his own personal faith is the response to the appeal which that life makes upon him. Therefore the Christ of history, the Christ of the New Testament, born at Bethlehem, crucified on Calvary, raised from the dead, and exalted to the throne of heaven, is the true foundation of his religious faith. This is indispensable to him. Give him the substantial truth of the gospel story, and his basis is secure.

No one can *give* it him. He must himself examine the evidence, and ascertain whether God has given him this which he has settled with himself, is the indispensable foundation. Does he possess this external historic certainty? For twenty years, our apologists have toiled to construct a chain of argument to convince him that he does. It is Sisyphean labour. Historic certainty of the human life of our Lord, that is secure. But the supernatural element, the virgin birth, the re-animation of the crucified body, its ascension to the skies, are these matters of knowledge, or objects of faith? If they were matters of knowledge, events established by testimony

apart from the truth of the religious doctrines based upon them, they would be a common ground and starting point, both for the believer and the unbeliever in Christianity. But confessedly these unique events are credible only when considered as events in the story of the Son of God. That is, when the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Ascension, are believed prior to examination of the evidence, then only, if then, the historic evidence is found to be ample.

Here is the parting of the ways where, in sorrowful loyalty to truth and intellectual honesty, many have abandoned the name and profession of Christianity. What else could they do? For a hundred years and more our divines and apologists, from Butler and Paley to the present day, have been teaching that Christianity is an external revelation, a revelation by its nature elevated above the judgment of human faculties, necessarily therefore, accredited in the last resort by supernatural credentials, that is by miracles and prophecy. It was contended that the historic evidence carried us back to eye-witnesses, and placed the marvellous occurrences beyond the reach of doubt; that the resurrection, for instance, was a proved and indubitable event, established by the very same evidence as that which establishes the crucifixion. The apologists now acknowledge that what the evidence establishes is that the first generation of Christians believed in the resurrection. Their belief is the ultimate fact which is historically certain. And in regard to the miracles generally, it is now clearly seen that we believe the miracles (if we believe them) on account of the doctrines, not the doctrines on account of the miracles. Yet we were taught that apart from the

evidence of the miracles, we ought not to receive such doctrines. No wonder that those who were bound to Christianity by no more than the logical argument have taken their departure, and become agnostics or positivists. That the Christian faith was not extinguished, that so few comparatively were lost, while so many remained, that the discovery of the weakness of the logical position has been contemporaneous with a marked revival of spiritual life and missionary zeal, is sufficient proof that the faith is not identical with our explanation of its nature and origin. It is more than we can understand, and has deeper roots than we can lay bare. We need not fear. Christianity survived ecclesiasticism; it survives biblicalism, it will survive the tremendous discovery that the old apologetic argument has collapsed.

At the present moment the Church has not fully recovered from the bewilderment consequent upon this discovery. Believers hold fast by the life, but they have not emerged into the light. They know and are sure in their hearts that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life, but their intellects are befogged. One by one the cherished beliefs of a life-time, of generations and ages, have been demolished, and as yet the process of reconstruction is not apparent. Practical men get impatient. They weary of fruitless discussion, resolve arbitrarily to put a stop, so far as they themselves are concerned, to controversy, to inquiry, to doubt. They know by an inward feeling the essential truth of the Christian religion; they know by sufficient historical evidence that this religion has its roots in Jesus of Nazareth, and the gospel story. They will assume the

truth of Christianity, without precise definition of what they mean by it, without exact investigation why they believe it. Life is short. The work is urgent. There is no end to debate. They must put an end by an act of will. They will believe, and work, and pray for their own salvation and the salvation of the world, leaving controversy to the theologians and scientists.

But there are those to whom this illogical compromise is impossible. They must go on striving to the last for a reconciliation between the heart and the intellect. Passionate truth-lovers like Henri Frédéric Amiel, have been consumed by internal conflict, have lived seemingly blighted lives, because they could not attain to the reconciliation. Yet the quest is taken up by new seekers, and must be, until the goal is reached. Ah! how full of anguish is the long, slow, vainly protracted, process of surrender. The first condition of security, of peace, of healthy growth, is to be true to the truth. And the truth requires that we should give up trying to think that we know that to be true, which we do not know to be true. True it may be, God may see it to be true, but if we do not know it to be true, then to attempt to persuade ourselves that we do, is disobedience to the Light, is distrust of God. Must I choose between the Church and God? Then let the Church go. Must I choose between the Bible and God? Then let the Bible go. Must I choose between Jesus Christ and God? Then even Jesus Christ will I give up. After this, there is nothing left to sacrifice. To give up my own personal immortality is nothing, is rather a relief. Who would wish to live hereafter, without Jesus Christ? Let all go, if truth so require. But though the darkness closes

all around, on the past, on the future, on the present also, though all is uncertainty, all is mystery; in one small circle around my feet, there shines a clear light from heaven. The revelation of duty is the revelation of God. All else is gone, but God and duty abide. Now I live in and by the pure truth. There are no more make-believes: no more subtle and sophistical self-persuadings, that in certain circumstances, to minister to my egotistical cravings, two and two can amount to five. I am brought very low; I have been stripped of all my treasures: I have descended to the bottom of the abyss; but at least I am now on the solid ground. Henceforth, "Lo! I come to do Thy will, O God: Thy law is in my heart." For all else, "it is the Lord. Let Him do as seemeth Him good." For me, absolute self-surrender, humble, patient, watchful obedience, light to see the next step forward, strength to take that one step; this is my true life. With less than this I cannot live. Having this much, I may well be content, whether my life endure but for a day, or through the aeons of aeons.

This is the sure foundation. This is the true beginning of the Christian life. That life is not rooted in far-off supernatural events, in unattainable metaphysical heights; but in the meeting-point between God and the soul in the consciousness of duty. We must build up our spiritual life upon certainties, not upon mere probabilities, however probable. God and duty are certainties; purity, love, self-sacrifice are certainties. Conscience is consciousness, is spiritual vision: there is no certainty clearer, surer, closer, more trustworthy than this. The solid earth beneath, the majestic canopy of heaven

with all its worlds, may be an illusion rather than this ; for the external universe is but reported to the consciousness by the senses, whereas conscience is the immediate cognizance of spiritual truth, no more capable of illusiveness than the truths of mathematics. This is the inward Light which shone so brightly in George Fox and his disciples ; which has shone in every pious soul from the beginning of the world, though too often neglected, even mistrusted. Now in the end of the ages, God sends us back to this, calls us back to Himself. He is our present guide, our immediate teacher. He will have us trust in Him alone.

This lesson learned, obedience brings its reward. Now the believer discovers what that means ; “ he that loveth his life shall lose it ; he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.” For the truth’s sake, that is for Christ’s sake, we gave up all, and all is being given back, changed as to its form, clothed in new beauty and power. We dared not build up our faith in the supernatural Son of God, on the evidence of miracles ; but left alone with the Son of Man, the Crucified, we loved Him as never before, and as we humbly endeavoured to walk in His steps, lo ! He was transfigured before us ; all His memory, all His story, all His influence through the ages was illumined by its own celestial light, until it shone with the glory of the Eternal Love, and we heard the voice from heaven, “ This is my beloved Son ; hear ye Him.” The miracles we cannot verify ; but the Spirit of Christ bears witness to our spirit, and we know that He is the Word of God, the Light of the world, the Revealer of the Father. There is one central Divine thought, in which is summed up for us all that God means man to

be, so far as we can conceive it; and that thought is Christ. There is one perfect Divine manifestation of the heart of the Infinite Father, and that manifestation is Christ. There is one reconciliation of the sinful, suffering, struggling world, to the Eternal Righteousness and Eternal Love, and that reconciliation is Christ. And the Christ is not afar in the distant haze of a dimly discerned history, but He is the Light within, the very Spirit which illumines our life, and leads us into His own likeness. We gave up the Bible as an infallible oracle, speaking unintelligible mysteries, and now it is given back to us, the record of God's teaching to His people of old, the treasure-house of revelations to and through prophets and apostles and the Son Himself, which we can enter into, and in our measure receive and possess, by the inspiration of the same Spirit. We gave up the Church as the infallible authority, lord over God's heritage; it is given back to us as the communion of saints, the home of God's children, a spiritual brotherhood to which many unconsciously belong, who are ignorant of its very name. We gave up our own immortality, and we find ourselves already in possession of the eternal life. When once we have attained to the complete surrender, when we have given up all and our own selves also, to God and to the truth; then a voice is heard saying: "All things are yours; whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours: and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

This is an era of transition. It is not given to us to foresee the future. It is enough for us that we can see the direction in which the Church is being guided by the overruling Spirit. The changes which will come, in

custom, form, ritual, and creed, we cannot predict. But we may rest assured that nothing which is true and good shall perish. We may confidently expect that the Christianity of the future will be more spiritual, more practical, more catholic, more Christ-like. Already the dawning of the new era has begun. Already in thousands and thousands of hearts the new light is shining. Already we hear a thousand voices cry: Christianity is not the Church: Christianity is not the Bible, Christianity is Christ. Already we can mark how many a quiet strong soul utters no word, but goes forth with compressed lips, to live the Christ, instead of talking about Him. It may be that this new era now beginning is destined to work as marvellous a change in religion, as the dawning of the Baconian era has effected in science. When Christians everywhere learn to quit remote and unfruitful speculations for the actual practice of the Christian life, when we all perceive that, not to know the truth about Christ, but to be ourselves in our measure reproductions of Christ, is true Christianity, may it not be hoped that in the infinite mercy and love of God, there will be such a quickening of faith and love and hope, such an outpouring of Christ-like benevolence toward the poor, the suffering and the sinful, such an impetus of self-sacrifice for the elevation of the degraded and vicious, such a wealth of Christian character, well-balanced and complete in honesty and veracity, temperance and courage, purity and kindness, that it shall seem as though a new race of men had been evolved, beholding which the world will see a Christianity unimagined hitherto, a victorious Kingdom of God subduing humanity to itself, needing no evidence out-side itself to prove its divine truth, shining in the

hearts and eyes of all, with the light that is from heaven? Here and there in the past there have been a few Christ-like men and women, scattered points of light illumining the wide spaces of darkness, and the world has felt itself hallowed by their presence, and has worshipped them as the saints of God. What shall it be when the whole Church awakens to the truth, and actually lives the life of Christ?

It is not yet the full day, only the early streaks of dawn are seen above the horizon. But to us it is given to be friends of truth and children of the Light, to know the Christ within, the Lord and Saviour of our life. Let us be true to the truth, and walk in the light, waiting humbly and patiently upon God, seeking to be guided by His Spirit, instead of following our own wills, then shall we do our part to hasten the brightness of the coming day, and shall have our place in the Eternal Home.

This tone of glowing confidence is not possible to all at all times. The prince of Dreamers, of whose Calvinistic theology these pages have spoken disparagingly, was a shrewd observer of human nature, and has depicted it with marvellous fidelity. The men and women in whose company he made his own pilgrimage, and whose portraits he has photographed for us in his book, were not all of them Great-hearts and Valiants for truth, not all even Christians, Faithfuls and Hopefuls; in his journey he travelled along in frequent contact with Despondency, and his daughter Much-afraid, with Feeble-mind, Ready-to-halt, and Fearing. Their descendants creep and stumble along the road to-day, and at times through tear-dimmed eyes can scarce discern whether they are on the road and have no far-off vision of the

Celestial city. And there are those among us, as there were in Bunyan's day, although not included in his picture, honest seekers after truth, who have not found the Way, and cannot feel sure that there is a Way at all. Possibly to some of these feeble ones, and searchers, the story of the Children of the Light may bring a gleam of hope, and give a guiding clue. They may see how it is possible to walk by faith, without credulity, or insincerity. The intellectual development of the early Quakers was two centuries behind our own age; their opinions cannot be altogether ours. But their method, which in spite of some blemishes, was on the whole eminently successful, is as suitable for ourselves as for them. The peculiarity of their method was this; they made practical experiment of Christianity from the inside. Of course they were not the first discoverers of this method. All true Christians have adopted it in all ages. But these despised Quakers more clearly, more thoroughly than others recognised that this is the true way; that we ought to begin with this; that, in fact, there is no other. It was a great discovery, worthy to be reckoned a revelation from God, a revelation still imperfectly acknowledged. For until this day most inquirers stand outside Christianity, demanding that it shall give a plain account of itself, and prove that it is what it claims to be, before they will yield obedience. This seems, but is not, reasonable; it necessarily takes a long time, and meanwhile what are we doing? We must act; and we are morally bound to follow the Light within, before we have solved all logical puzzles. Moreover this way of proceeding treats Christianity as though it were principally a matter of knowledge. In

fact, it is not solely nor chiefly a matter of knowledge ; it is a matter involving conscience, conduct, faith, and feeling. Without entering into the question of the exact relations and proportions of these several elements, is it quite reasonable to postpone all the rest until the intellectual inquiry is concluded ? These Children of the Light did not think so. They began with conduct, they began with faith. But it was not faith in a wide scheme of doctrine, embracing the universe and eternity : it was faith in a present experience, of a very limited range, but of the certainty of which they had full assurance. The secret Light shining in the heart to reprove unrighteousness, was to them a revelation of God, that is, of His will concerning them. This was in them the faint streak of dawn, beginning of a heavenly day ; this was the little seed, which grew to a goodly tree.

The advantage of this method is that it gives, within limits, certainty. Christian doctrine, it is plain, is not equally certain, in all its parts. Confessedly, we have in some matters to be content with probability ; which according to Bishop Butler is “the very guide of life.”¹ But probability does not suffice for faith ; probability is, after all, only another name for doubt ; a high degree of probability means that there is little room for doubt ; but there is still some room. Faith requires certainty, and cannot exist upon any other basis. Now Christianity consists of truth which comes within the range of immediate intuition, present experience, and constant verification ; and of other truth lying outside this range, but more or less closely connected with it. Facts of the remote past, expectations of the unseen future, attempts

¹ *Introduction to the Analogy.*

to express the Infinite in human language, these cannot have certainty of the same kind as that which belongs to the contents of our personal experience. Therefore, in order to have a saving faith, we must begin by trusting in the present revelation of God's Spirit. When we fully trust in God, where we have certain knowledge, it will become easy to trust, not our own speculations but Him, for all which lies beyond the range of certainty.

This certainty grows. They who trust in the first and simplest revelations of duty, with that trust which is obedience, have an ever widening perception of the truth of the Christian life, which is manifested in Jesus Christ. They know that His perfect faith in God, His perfect loyalty to truth, His perfect love to man, all culminating in His great act of self-sacrifice on the Cross, are the highest revelation of God to and in man. Those who have seen this truth know that it is true. To them, nothing in physical science, nothing in mathematics, nothing whatever which comes within human thought and experience, is more sure, more trustworthy than this. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

THE END.

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